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ユーモラスなイメージが強い妖怪も現代的な恐怖で解釈すれば、人間の心の闇が浮き彫りになる。恐怖の妖怪に立ち向かう“天空之狗”たちに危険が迫る。新解釈のヒーロー・天狗の活躍を描く第2弾!!お楽しみください。

永井豪

天空之狗

TENKU NO INU

永井豪とダイナミックプロ

MORNING KC

モーニングKC983

天空之狗 2

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狗井新平

フリーターだったが、旅行先で遭遇した事件で自分の隠れた能力を知り、天空社へ入社。しかし、まだ超能力をうまく使うことができない。

小角天堂

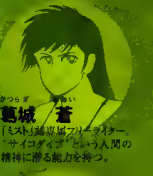
天空社の会長であり、他の“狗”たちの育ての親。

天津 力

天空社の社長。新人の能力を見抜き、天空社への入社を勧める。“跡継ぎ”の天狗

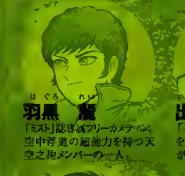
出羽堅信

天空社のオカルト雑誌月刊「ミスト」の編集長。“サイコバリア”という超能力を使う。



葛城 蒼

「ミスト」編集部フリーライター。“サイコダイブ”という人間の精神に潜る能力を持つ。



羽黒 龍

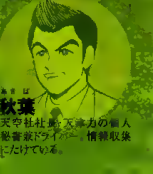
「ミスト」記者&フリーカメラマン。空中浮遊の超能力を持つ天空之狗メンバーの一人。

出雲 太

「ミスト」編集部。人の意識を自在にコントロールすることができる超能力を持つ。

鞍馬 蘭

「ミスト」敏腕人編集室。自分の姿を消すことができる“天狗の隠れ蓑”という能力を持つ。



秋葉

天空社社長・天津力の個人秘書兼ドライバー。情報収集にたけている。

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2
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PRESENTED BY HAPPY SCANS

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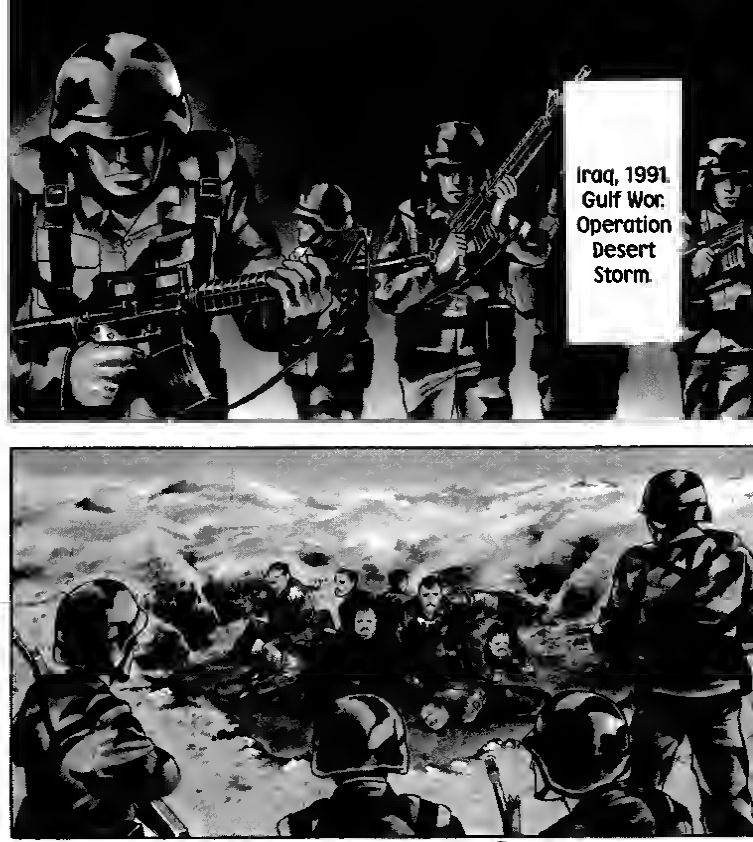
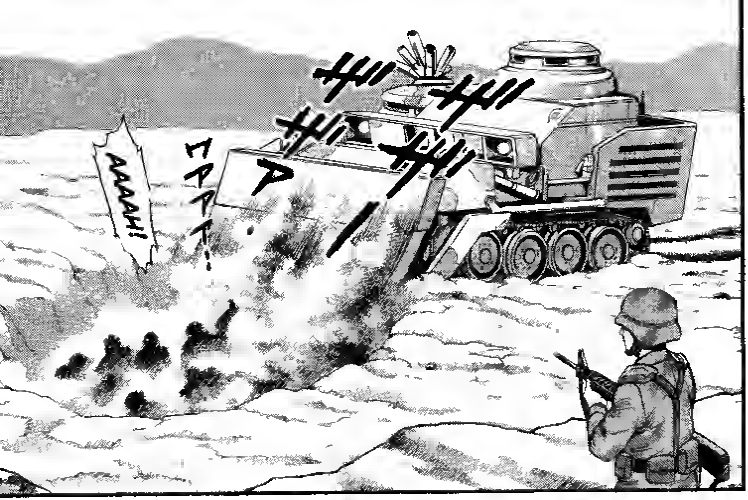
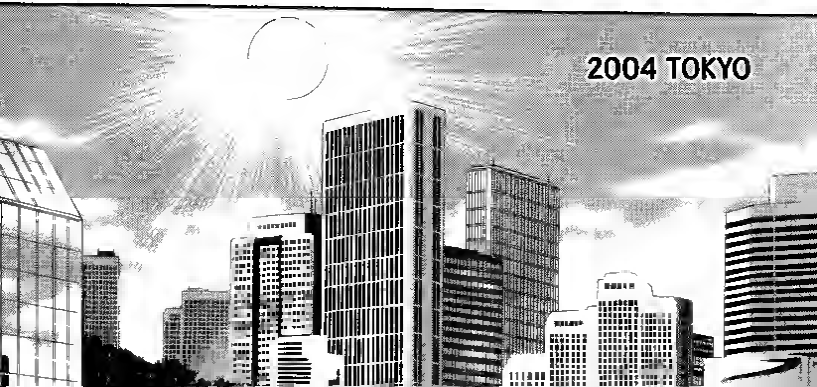
TRANSLATED BY MUSIC OTAKU
EDITING BY WRIGHT
QC BY KAZUHIKO

第1章 Sand Witch
サンド
ウィッチ


Iraq, 1991.
Gulf War:
Operation
Desert
Storm.


AAAAH!
ガガガ!


2004 TOKYO

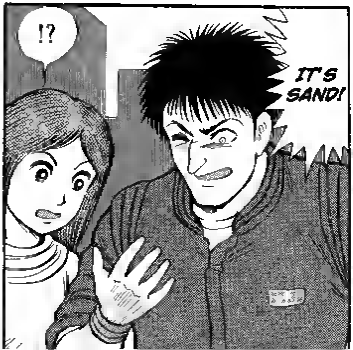
KURAMA, I HAD NO IDEA EVEN YOU HAD SUCH AN AMAZING SUPERPOWER....
YOU SAY THAT NOW, BUT AT THE TIME YOUR REACTION WAS LIKE, "SHE'S A MONSTER!"
NO WAY, NO WAY! ON THE CONTRARY, I'M JEALOUS
REALLY ?
ANYBODY WOULD WANT THAT POWER..
MEN PROBABLY WANT IT, HEHEHE...
TO PEEP ON WOMEN, RIGHT?
AH. NO WAY! WELL, MAYBE A LITTLE?
ISN'T THAT THE WAY YOU ARE?
OH, SUCH A CUTE BLUSH BEING HONEST?

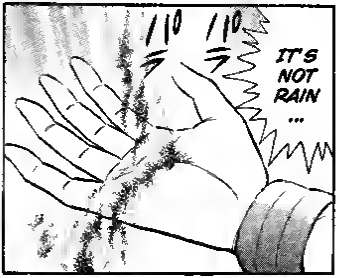
IS EVERY-BODY OFF?
BY THE WAY, IT SURE IS QUIET TODAY
THEY CAN SMELL WHEN SOMETHING'S HAPPENING AND COME IN THEN
AREN'T I YOUR SENIOR?
DON'T TALK DOWN TO ME
I'VE COME TO REALIZE THAT EACH OF THEM HAS AMAZING POWERS, BUT ..
PRESIDENT AMATSU, AOI KATSURAGI, AND REI HAGURO
WHAT ABOUT THAT GUY BEHIND US?
MMM
SHH! HE'LL HEAR US!
THAT WEIRDO FATTY IZUMO!

HONESTLY, I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT HIM...
REALLY ?
NO WORRIES WHEN HE'S BURIED IN A DIRTY BOOK, HE DOESN'T HEAR ANYTHING
PLAYER? YOU MEAN HE'S A WOMANIZER?
BUT I HEAR HE'S A PLAYER...
STILL...
THE IDEA THAT AN UGLY GUY LIKE THAT HAS A CHANCE!
HE'S SO FULL OF HIMSELF AND ACTS LIKE THERE ISN'T A WOMAN IN THE WORLD THAT WOULDN'T FALL FOR HIM!
IT'S REALLY GROSS!

HE ALWAYS ACTS LIKE THAT WITH ME AND IT REALLY BUGS ME!
MAYBE. IF THAT'S HIS SPECIAL POWER IT COULD BE SCARY...
AFTER ALL, THERE'S NO WAY HE'S A NORMAL PERSON.
YOU MAY REALLY NEED TO BE CAREFUL WITH HIM...
SHINPEI, ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT L'IL OL' ME?
EH?
WORRIED...?
WELL, SORTA?
HEY!
THAT'S GREAT!
WAIT A MINUTE!
!?

HUH?
RAIN?
OH?


!?
IT'S SAND!

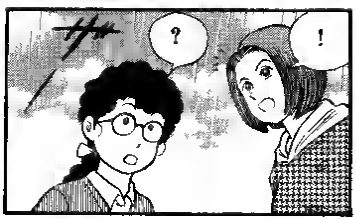

IT'S NOT RAIN ...

SO WHERE'S THE SAND COMING FROM?

KIDS WERE PICKING UP NASTY THINGS LIKE TETANUS FROM THE DOG POO AND REFUSE IN IT...
RIGHT
THERE HASN'T BEEN A SANDBOX HERE LATELY, RIGHT?

IT WAS SO GREAT FOR LETTING THE KIDS PLAY BY THEMSELVES.
IT'D BE OKAY IF THEY WERE TAKING CARE OF IT PROPERLY.

!
KYA!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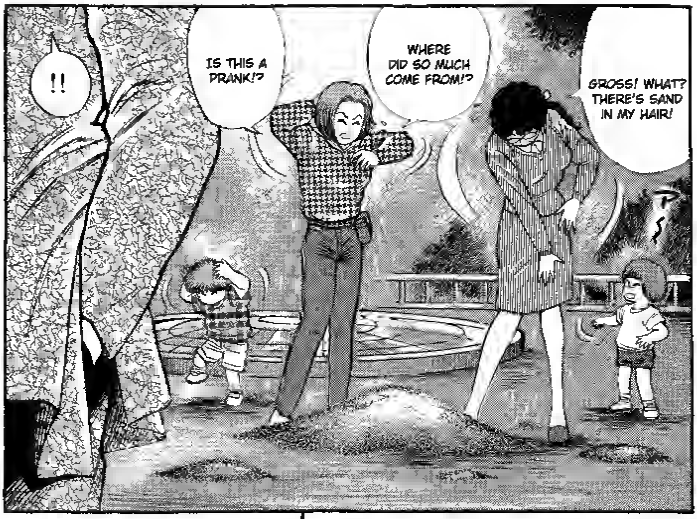
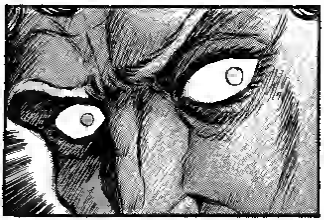
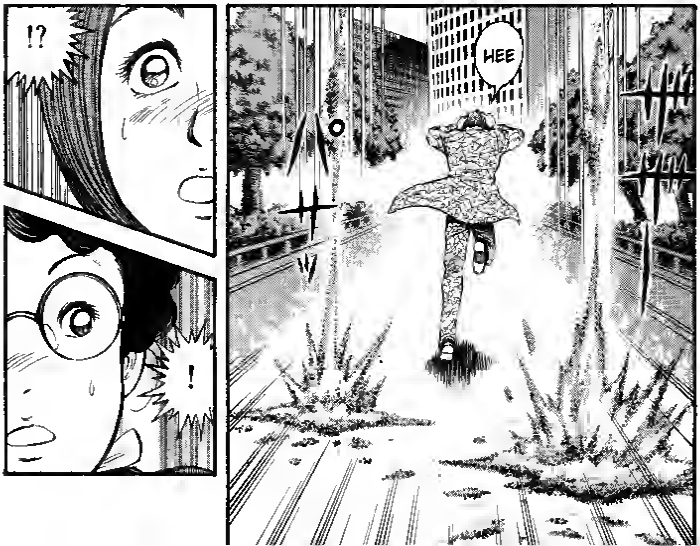

!!
IS THIS A PRANK!?
WHERE DID SO MUCH COME FROM!?
GROSS! WHAT? THERE'S SAND IN MY HAIR!

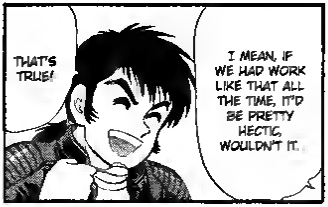
WAAA



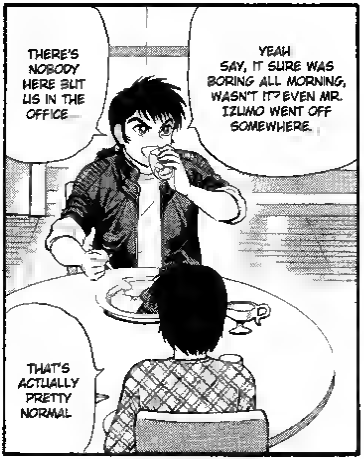
!?
Sand Witch


!?
!
HEE

YOU'D THINK THE FOOD IN THE COMPANY CAFETERIA WOULD BE TASTELESS MUSH
はぐ
はぐ
THIS'S PRETTY GOOD, ISN'T IT?


THAT'S TRUE!
I MEAN, IF WE HAD WORK LIKE THAT ALL THE TIME, IT'D BE PRETTY HECTIC, WOULDN'T IT.

IF THE PRESIDENT DOESN'T SHOW UP, THERE ISN'T MUCH TO DO

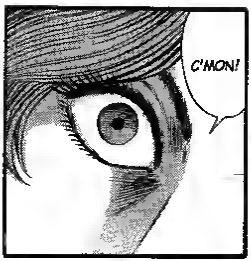

THERE'S NOBODY HERE BUT US IN THE OFFICE
YEAH SAY, IT SURE WAS BORING ALL MORNING, WASN'T IT? EVEN MR. IZUMO WENT OFF SOMEWHERE.
THAT'S ACTUALLY PRETTY NORMAL

WHEN SHE'S NOT HERE, I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE SHE IS. SHE ALWAYS APPEARS OUT OF NOWHERE.
PRESIDENT AMATSU IS AMAZING...SHE ONLY SHOWS UP WHEN SHE'S NEEDED.
BUT EVEN IF YOU THINK ABOUT GOING HOME, IF SHE'S GONNA COME IN, SOMETHING WILL KEEP YOU FROM IT.
IN FACT, IF YOU CAN'T FIND HER IN THE OFFICE, IT'S OKAY TO GO ON HOME.
NO WAY!
HUUUH?
I GOT A TELEPATHIC MESSAGE.
C'MON!
HURRY! TO THE CONFERENCE ROOM!
JUST ONE MORE PIECE OF PIE!
I DON'T GET TELEPATHY!
SHE'S HERE!
AH!
EEH?
LUNCH IS OVER!

THIS COULD BE BAD...
SAND, IS IT?
HMM...
THIS...
IS IT A CASE?
UMM... MAY I SPEAK...?
IT IS NOT LOESS FROM THE YELLOW RIVER BASIN
YOU OFTEN HEAR ABOUT SAND FROM THE YELLOW RIVER IN CHINA RIDING OVER ON AIR CURRENTS...
SAND IS FALLING OUT OF THE SKY ALL OVER THE PLACE, RIGHT?

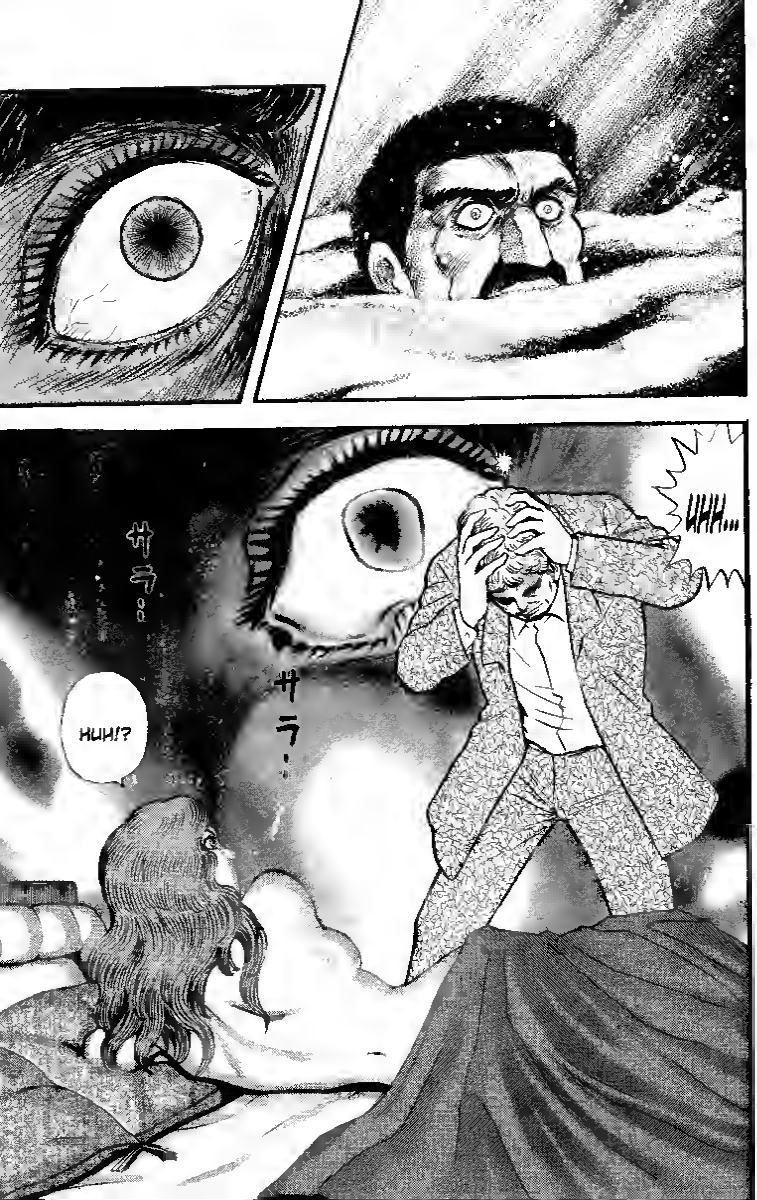
IT'S A SPIRIT MONSTER FOR SURE!
A SAND-THROWING HAG!!
SA...
SAND THROW-ING...
HAG ...?
.....

PUB
BAR
HEY, GUY. YOU LOOK AWFULLY SAD FOR SUCH AN ELEGANT FOREIGNER
YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT IT...?
HOTEL
L
O
N
I MAY BE ABLE TO HELP...


C'MON!

!

DON'T I FIRE YOU UP...?
WHAT IS IT? MY CLOTHES ARE OFF...
I LOVE AMERICAN MEN, SO THIS IS A FREEBIE.


HHH...
サラ!
サラ...
HUH!?

キャア
Sandwitch

IT WAS THE TOP ECHELON OF THE POLICE WHO REQUESTED INVOLVE-MENT FROM HEAVEN, INC.
IT'S NOT THAT WEIRD AN INCIDENT, SO WE HAVEN'T BEEN KEEPING THE DETAILS FROM THE MEDIA.
HEAVEN
THERE'S BEEN A CASE WHERE SO MUCH SAND FELL THAT IT KILLED SOMEONE!
THE CAUSE OF DEATH WAS SUFFO-CATION.
THE VICTIM WAS SUDDENLY BURIED UNDER A LARGE QUANTITY OF SAND INSIDE A HOTEL ROOM!!

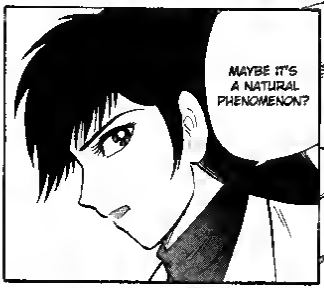
A PROSTITUTE, HUH? WAS A JOHN WITH HER?
IT MUST HAVE BEEN TERRIBLE..
BURIED ALIVE BY SAND! WHAT A PITY..
THE VICTIM BURIED ALIVE WAS A WOMAN IN HER UPPER 30S: ALLEGEDLY A PROSTITUTE.
THE JOHN THAT DAY WAS A FOREIGNER.
SHE OFTEN USED THIS HOTEL FOR HER BUSINESS
HE WAS SHRIEKING AS HE VANISHED INTO THE DIMLY LIT STREETS...
AFTER A THUNDEROUS ROAR THAT SHOOK THE WHOLE BUILDING, ONE OF THE HOTEL EMPLOYEES SAW THE FOREIGNER FLEEING AWAY.
ALLEGEDLY A MIDDLE-AGED WHITE MAN..

MEANING A SAND THROWING HAG!
BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN FOOD. IT WAS MOST LIKELY THE WORDS, "SAND WITCH."
THE EMPLOYEE TESTIFIED THAT HE HEARD THE WORD, "SANDWICH."
IN THE LONELY, SHADOWY WOODS AROUND NARA'S SHRINES THEY WOULD THREATEN PASSERSBY BY SPRINKLING SAND ON THEM...
ESPECIALLY IN THE KINKI AREA IN PLACES LIKE NARA AND HYOGO PREFECTURES.
THERE ARE MANY STORIES ABOUT A SAND THROWING HAG.
IN THE HYOGO PREFECTURE TOWN OF NISHINOMIYA, THERE IS AN OLD STORY OF A SAND-THROWING HAG IN A PINE TREE.

IT'S NOTHING TO LAUGH AT!
THE IDEA OF A RACCOON-DOG THROWING SAND IS A LOT CUTER!
THIS THING IS KILLING PEOPLE!

SO SOME PEOPLE SAY IT'S NOT A A WOMAN AT ALL, BUT RATHER A RACCOON DOG THROWING THE SAND
BUT NO ONE HAS ACTUALLY SEEN AN OLD WOMAN

UNLIKE NOW, THERE WERE NO STORES OF PEOPLE BEING KILLED, SO IT WAS MORE LIKE A PRANK


MAYBE IT'S A NATURAL PHENOMENON?

INSTEAD OF OLD WOMEN, SOME STORIES SUGGESTED VARIOUS KINDS OF ANIMALS LIKE RACCOON DOGS AND BIRDS THAT WERE TOSSING SAND FROM HIGH UP IN TREES.

According to "Yaukai Dangi" by the famaus folklarist Yunagita Kunia, stories like "The Legend of Tana" describe desalate forests and shrines that have sand strewn about here and there. In the Kansai regian it was said that these were left by "sand-throwing hags," even thaugh na one ever actually saw an ald woman. It is perhaps a bit strange that even thaugh no ane ever saw a woman, they would blame it an "sand-throwing hags." In volume 39 af "Falklare" (Rakuninsha Editions) it states that even thaugh it wos probably dane by raccoon dags, the phenamenan came to be described as the deed of "sand-throwing hags."

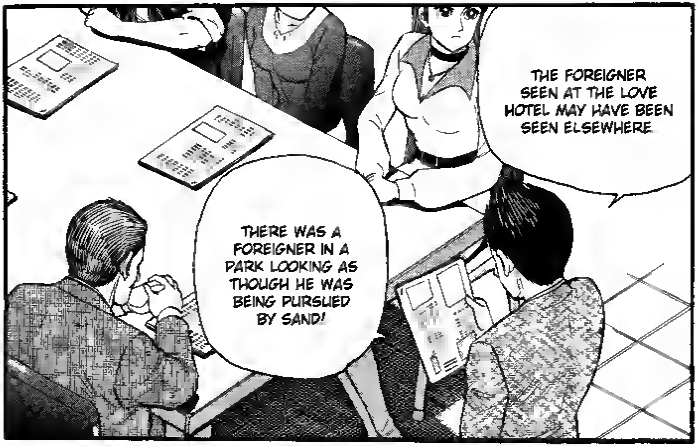
WHY WOULD THEY SAY A OLD WOMAN WAS THROWING SAND?
EVEN SO...
MAYBE
THERE WAS THAT PLACE UBASUTEYAMA WHERE THEY TREATED OLD PEOPLE WHO COULD NO LONGER WORK LIKE GARBAGE TO BE THROWN OUT. SOME OF THOSE COULD HAVE BECOME SPIRIT MONSTERS.
MAYBE IT'S PREJUDICE AGAINST THE ELDERLY?

IN THE WESTERN COUNTRIES AS WELL
IN ANY CASE, THERE ARE TALES FROM ALL OVER JAPAN OF SAND FALLING MYSTERIOUSLY FROM THE SKY!
THERE ARE TALES OF SMALL ANIMALS OTHER THAN RACCOON DOGS THROWING SAND, LIKE FOXES AND WEASELS
IT'S NOT ABOUT MAKING SAND FALL.
TRUE
BUT THAT'S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PHENOM-ENON!
YOU MEAN LIKE THE GERMAN SAND-MAN?
IT'S FOR TRAINING CHILDREN. A LEGEND WITH A LITTLE THREAT
HE GOUGES OUT THE EYES OF CHILDREN WHO WON'T GO TO SLEEP.
FOR SOME REASON, SAND IS ASSOCIATED WITH SLEEP, AND THE SANDMAN IS THE SLEEP FAIRY

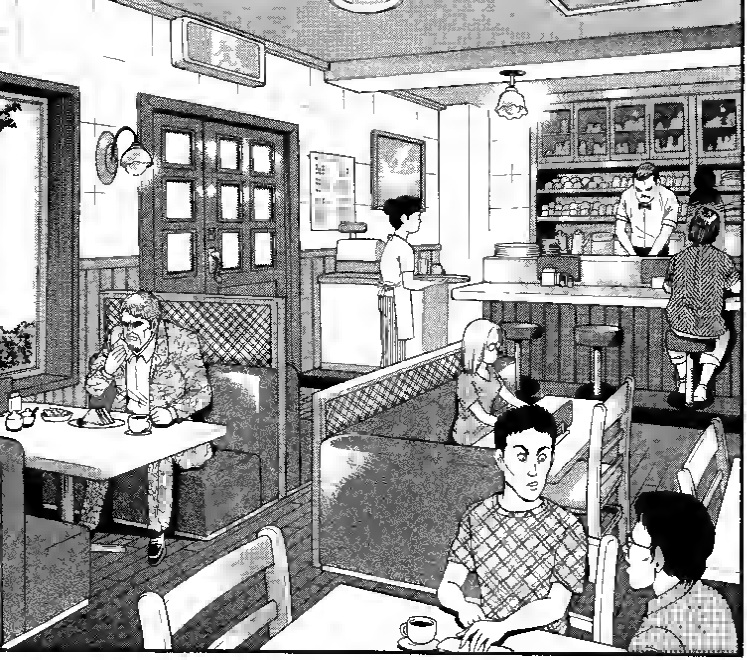
THAT SOUNDS SCARIER THAN A JAPANESE EYEBALL MONSTER!
BUT...

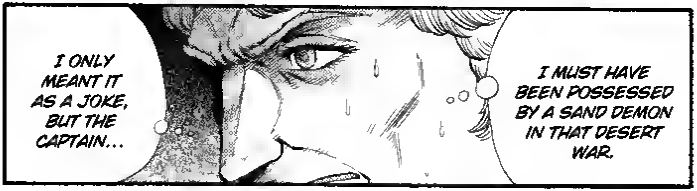
THE SANDMAN TAKES THE COLLECTED EYEBALLS TO HIS HOME ON THE MOON AND FEEDS THEM TO HIS CHILDREN WAITING THERE

IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THAN BURYING SOMEONE ALIVE WITH SAND!

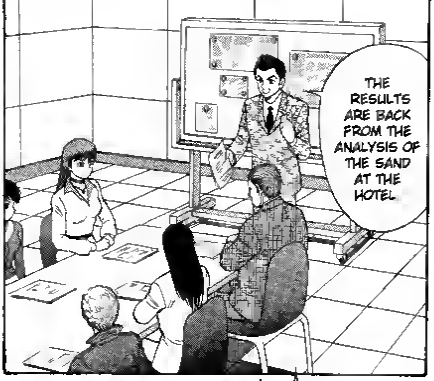

THE FOREIGNER SEEN AT THE LOVE HOTEL MAY HAVE BEEN SEEN ELSEWHERE
THERE WAS A FOREIGNER IN A PARK LOOKING AS THOUGH HE WAS BEING PURSUED BY SAND!

THE FOREIGNER COULD HAVE SUMMONED THE SAND-THROWING HAG ..
YOU THINK THEY'RE ONE AND THE SAME?
THERE'S NO HELP FOR ME ..
EVEN FOR-EIGNERS GET DEPRESSED, I GUESS!
DARK LOOKING FOREIGNER ISN'T HE?




I ONLY MEANT IT AS A JOKE, BUT THE CAPTAIN...
I MUST HAVE BEEN POSSESSED BY A SAND DEMON IN THAT DESERT WAR.

MAYBE SO...
HMM.
SHOOTING THEM IS A WASTE OF BULLETS. DON'T YOU THINK IT'D BE BETTER TO ROUND 'EM UP IN THE SAND AND BURY 'EM?


THE RESULTS ARE BACK FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE SAND AT THE HOTEL

HELLO ?
REALLY? ALRIGHT!

MIDDLE EAST!?
IT'S SAND FROM A DESERT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

NEVER FORGET...

I WILL ..

I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT DAY ON A HILL IN IRAQ
HE HAD FIGURED OUT MY PLAN WAS TO BURY THEM ALIVE.
HE WAS LOOKING AT ME!
RIGHT UP UNTIL HE WAS BURIED ALIVE!
HIS EYES WERE LOCKED ON MINE!

UWAAA
!
CHAIR-MAN!?
!
DO NOT MAKE LIGHT OF SAND!

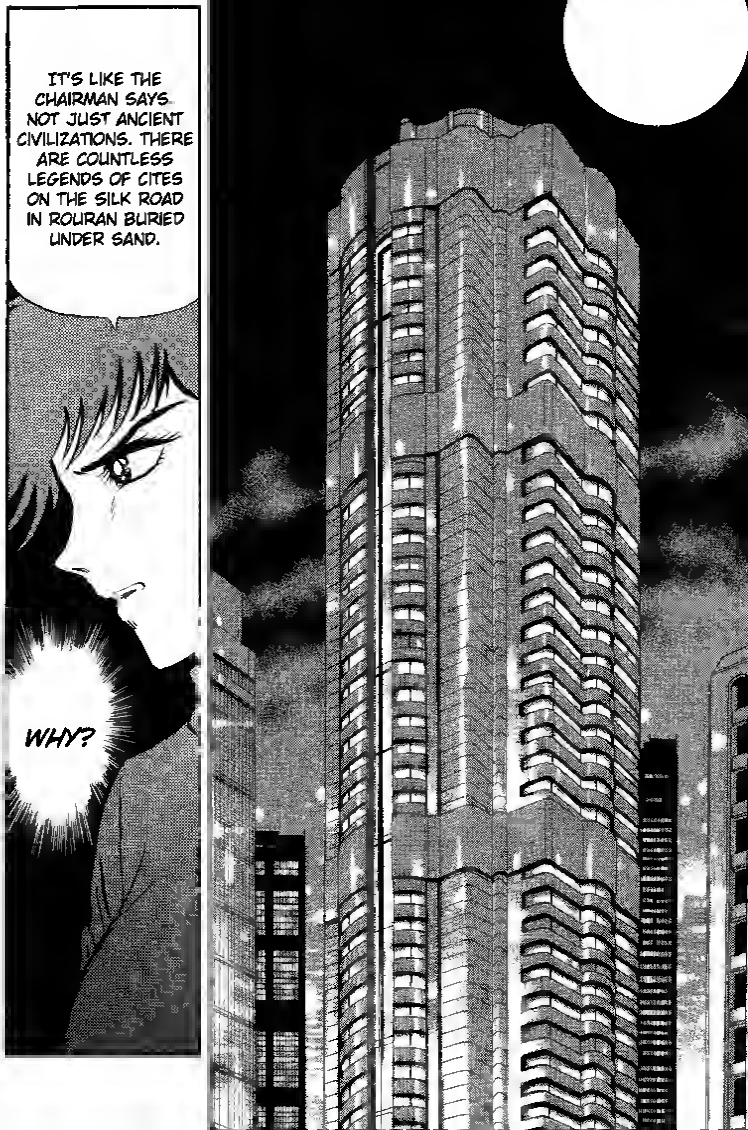
FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT DOES THE SAND FLOWING THROUGH THIS HOURGLASS BRING TO MIND?

UMM. HISTORY CONTINUING FROM LONG AGO, OR...
OR. MAYBE THE FEELING OF A ROMANCE CONTINUING FOR ETERNITY.
INDEED.. IT DOES GIVE THE FEELING OF CONTINUING FOR ETERNITY.
BUT IS IT NOT STR-ANGE!
MOST HOURGLASSES ONLY MEASURE A FEW MINUTES.
WHY IS THAT!?
WHY DOES IT REMIND US OF THE ETERNAL FLOW OF TIME!?
!?

TERRIFYING, CATASTROPHIC POWER!!
THERE IS MYSTIC POWER IN SAND!
LOOK AT THE BIRTHPLACES OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS!
EGYPT. MESOPOTAMIA. INDUS. THE YELLOW RIVER. ARE THEY NOT ALL BECOMING DESERTS?

SAND IS THE OMEN OF THE ONSET OF...
DOOM!

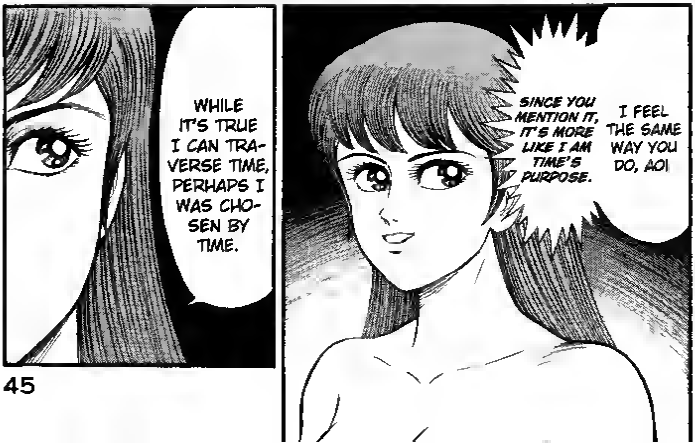
Chapter 4:
Sands of Destruction

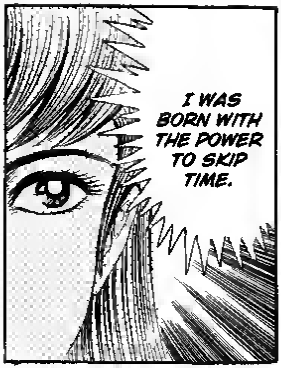

IT'S LIKE THE CHAIRMAN SAYS. NOT JUST ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS. THERE ARE COUNTLESS LEGENDS OF CITES ON THE SILK ROAD IN ROURAN BURIED UNDER SAND.
WHY?

PEOPLE GATHER TOGETHER, FORM CITIES, AND CIVILI-ZATION RIPENS.
IN ENGLISH THE WORD "DESERT" ALSO MEANS "ABANDONED" OR "SOMETHING DESERVED."
THEIR "JUST DESERTS" IS DESERTIFI-CATION!
BUT WITH SO MANY MOUTHS TO FEED, THEY CONSUME TOO MUCH!

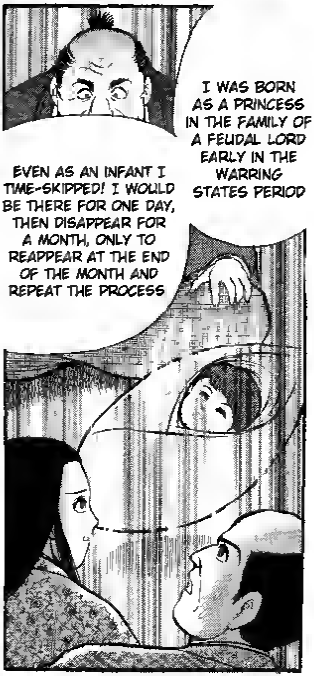
RIGHT... THERE MAY BE EVILS IN THE WORLD OTHER THAN THE MAGATSUHI: EVILS THAT WISH TO DESTROY EVERYTHING.
IT'S RELATED TO THE DESTRUC-TION OF PEOPLE'S SOULS.
CIVILIZATION RIPENS AND BECOMES DECADENT. WHEN DE-STRUCTION COMES....
THAT GUY'S PROBABLY LEVERAGING THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE TO TURN THE CITY INTO DESERT!
IT'S DEFINITELY SOME KIND OF DEMON LIKE THAT!
IT HAS TO BE.

YOU'VE SEEN THIS COUNTRY DESTROYED AND REBORN COUNTLESS TIMES WHAT DO YOU THINK?
YOU ARE CHIKARA AMATSU, THE "TIME TRAVERSING" TENGU.


WHILE IT'S TRUE I CAN TRAVERSE TIME, PERHAPS I WAS CHOSEN BY TIME.
SINCE YOU MENTION IT, IT'S MORE LIKE I AM TIME'S PURPOSE.
I FEEL THE SAME WAY YOU DO, AOI


I WAS BORN WITH THE POWER TO SKIP TIME.

PERHAPS I WAS CHOSEN TO FULFILL THE INTENTION OF TIME...
INDEED...


I WAS BORN AS A PRINCESS IN THE FAMILY OF A FEUDAL LORD EARLY IN THE WARRING STATES PERIOD
EVEN AS AN INFANT I TIME-SKIPPED! I WOULD BE THERE FOR ONE DAY, THEN DISAPPEAR FOR A MONTH, ONLY TO REAPPEAR AT THE END OF THE MONTH AND REPEAT THE PROCESS

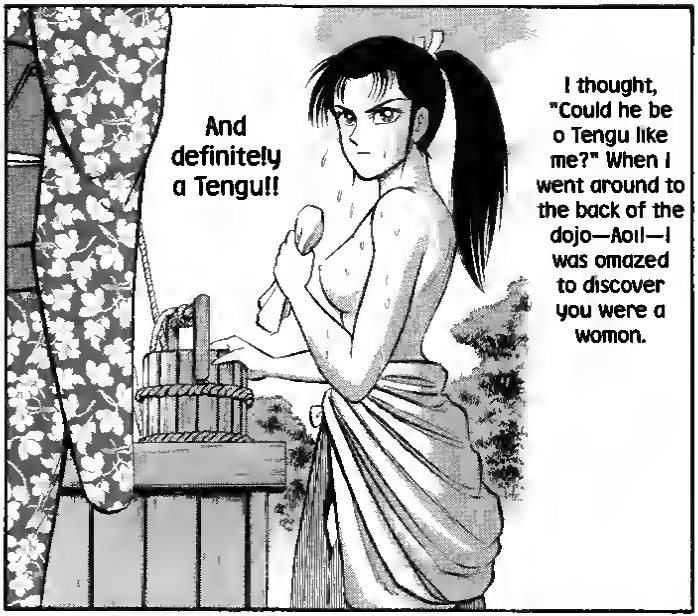
DISAPPEARING AND REAPPEARING LIKE THIS, SEVERAL YEARS PASSED, BUT I WAS STILL JUST A SUCKLING BABY PEOPLE WERE AMAZED.
MY PARENTS WERE CONCERNED AND CONSULTED A VERY FAMOUS ASCETIC. HE WAS THE IMMORTAL TENGU, OUR VERY OWN CHAIRMAN OZUNU.
HO... THIS IS A TIME-SKIPPING INFANT!
SHE HAS INCREDIBLE POWER!

EVEN THOUGH 10 YEARS HAVE PASSED AND SHE'S STILL AN INFANT, IT IS BECAUSE FOR HER ONLY ABOUT 100 DAYS HAVE PASSED
IT IS NOT THAT SHE IS NOT GROWING RATHER, SHE IS SKIPPING OVER TIME
SHE SKIPS THE PERIODS WHEN SHE DISAPPEARS.
SHE'S ONLY GROWN THAT NUMBER OF DAYS
SHE IS DIFFERENT! SHE WILL LIVE MANY CENTURIES!
SHE MUST NOT BE RAISED BY NORMAL HUMANS.
BUT!
THERE ARE VERY FEW LIKE HER.
WHAT AN AMAZING POWER!

I, THE IMMORTAL PILGRIM, WOULD LIKE TO TAKE CHARGE OF HER.
I WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HER!
I AM THE SORROWFUL TIME-TRAVERSING TENGU!
BY THE TIME I WAS OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER ANYTHING, MY PARENTS HAD LONG GONE BACK TO DUST.
I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER THEIR FACES...
FOR ME THE PASSAGE OF TIME IS LIKE WATCHING THE DIGEST VERSION OF A DOCUMENTARY.
I'M A ONE-WAY TIME TRAVELER.

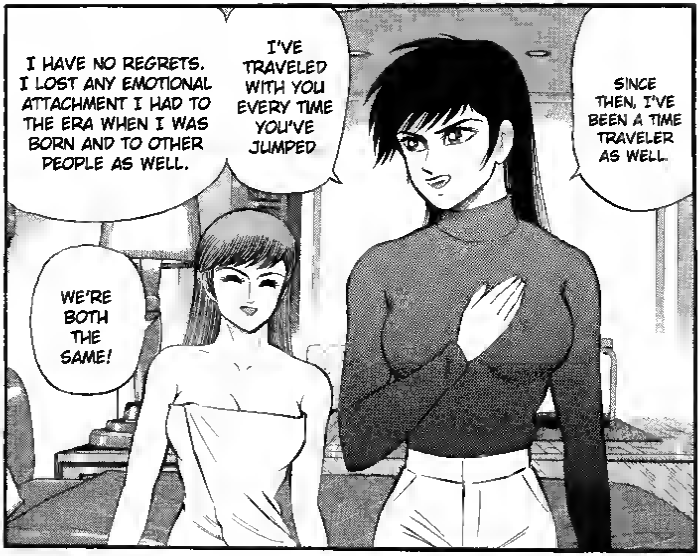
PEOPLE GROW QUICKLY TO ADULTHOOD AND WITHER AWAY..
THUS, I NEVER MADE ANY FRIENDS
THE ONLY PERSON WHO UNDERSTOOD ME WAS MY ADOPTIVE FATHER, THE CHAIRMAN
AOI, UNTIL I MET YOU I WAS COMPLETELY ALONE
I'LL NEVER FORGET THE JOY I FELT ON THE DAY I FIRST SAW YOU IN THAT DOJO IN EDO.

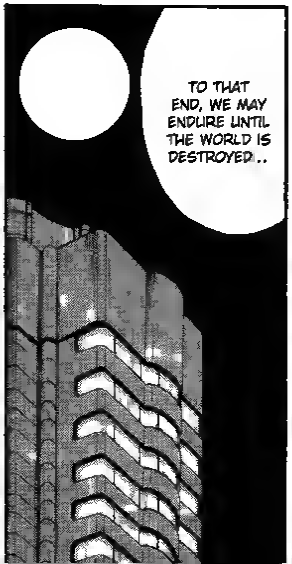
LIGHTNING FLASH!
IT WAS SUCH AN AMAZING FEAT!
AS A TENGU, I COULD SEE WHAT THE COMMON FOLK COULD NOT!

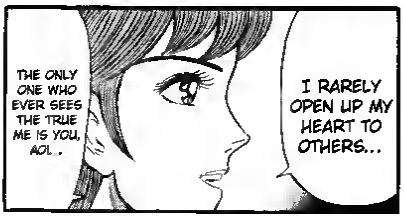

And definitely a Tengu!!
I thought, "Could he be a Tengu like me?" When I went around to the back of the dojo—Aoi!—I was amazed to discover you were a woman.

Then...
Neither of us could take our eyes off the other.

Then...
IN THAT INSTANT, WE BOTH UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING ABOUT THE OTHER...
THEN, I REALIZED YOUR HEART HAD ENTERED INTO THE VERY CENTER OF MY HEART...
Together, we traversed time!
I had discovered that if my heart perfectly matched another's I could carry that person with me!


I HAVE NO REGRETS. I LOST ANY EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT I HAD TO THE ERA WHEN I WAS BORN AND TO OTHER PEOPLE AS WELL.
I'VE TRAVELED WITH YOU EVERY TIME YOU'VE JUMPED
SINCE THEN, I'VE BEEN A TIME TRAVELER AS WELL.
WE'RE BOTH THE SAME!


TO THAT END, WE MAY ENDURE UNTIL THE WORLD IS DESTROYED..


THE ONLY ONE WHO EVER SEES THE TRUE ME IS YOU, AOI..
I RARELY OPEN UP MY HEART TO OTHERS...

PERHAPS TIME DOES HAVE A PURPOSE FOR US..

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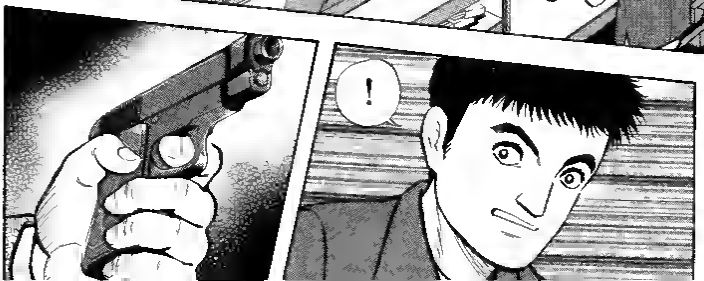
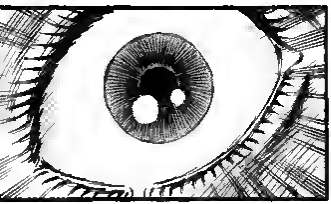
DREAM!

カシャ

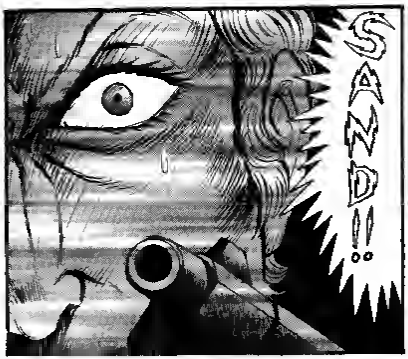
THANK YOU.

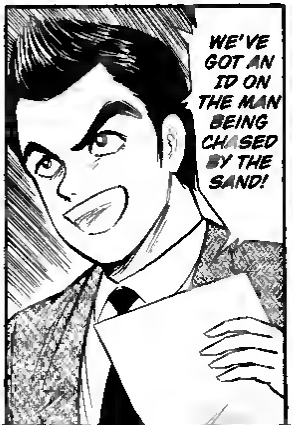

!

KYAH!
C'MON! MONEY, MONEY!
UWAAA!

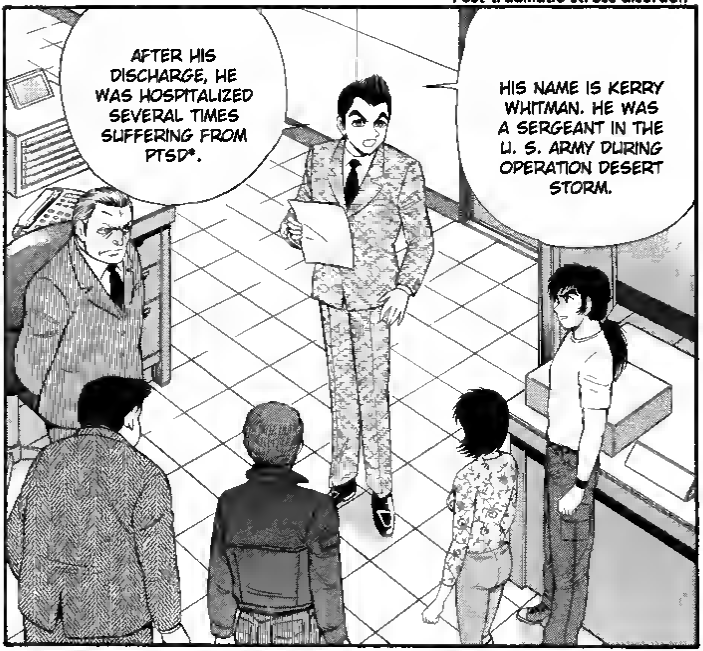


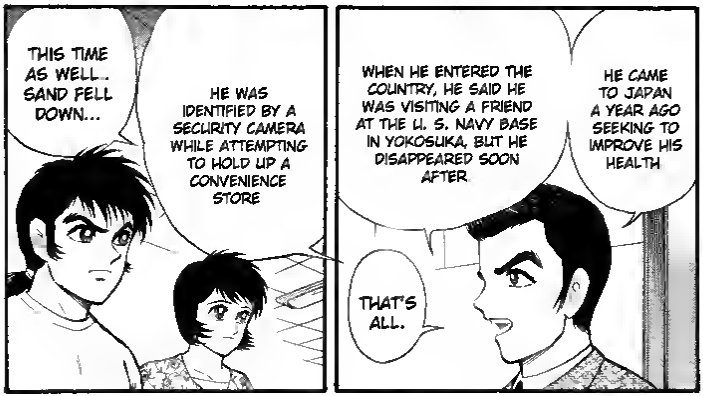
D-
PLEASE STOP!
DON'T SHOOT!


SAND!!


WE'VE GOT AN ID ON THE MAN BEING CHASED BY THE SAND!

* Post traumatic stress disorder.

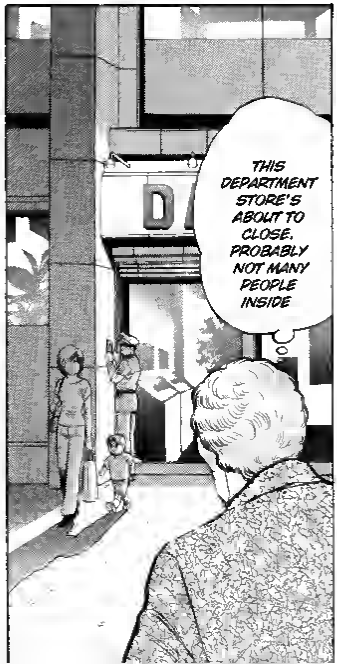

AFTER HIS DISCHARGE, HE WAS HOSPITALIZED SEVERAL TIMES SUFFERING FROM PTSD*.
HIS NAME IS KERRY WHITMAN. HE WAS A SERGEANT IN THE U. S. ARMY DURING OPERATION DESERT STORM.


THIS TIME AS WELL.. SAND FELL DOWN...
HE WAS IDENTIFIED BY A SECURITY CAMERA WHILE ATTEMPTING TO HOLD UP A CONVENIENCE STORE
WHEN HE ENTERED THE COUNTRY, HE SAID HE WAS VISITING A FRIEND AT THE U. S. NAVY BASE IN YOKOSUKA, BUT HE DISAPPEARED SOON AFTER
HE CAME TO JAPAN A YEAR AGO SEEKING TO IMPROVE HIS HEALTH
THAT'S ALL..

ARMED AND DANGEROUS!
HE'S GOT A HANDGUN FROM HIS TIME IN THE ARMY!
WHILE HE WAS THREATENING THE ATTENDANT WITH A SMALL HANDGUN, A LARGE AMOUNT OF SAND FELL WITHIN THE STORE, AND HE FLED WITHOUT STEALING ANYTHING.
CHECK EVERYONE IN THE AREA OF THE CONVENIENCE STORE!
SINCE HE DIDN'T STEAL ANY MONEY, HE PROBABLY HASN'T GONE FAR.
THINGS BEING WHAT THEY ARE, I WANT EACH OF YOU TOGETHER WITH ONE OF THE SAFETY SQUAD.
MAKE TRACKS!!

PO... POLICE!
THE STRANGE CASES BUREAU OF THE TOKYO METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT YOU HAVE TO BE TRANSFERRED IN.
THEY'RE ACTUALLY A SPECIAL SECTION OF THE POLICE!
THE BUSINESS AND HUMAN RESOURCE TEAMS DO THAT WORK FOR APPEARANCES' SAKE. .
SAFETY SQUAD?
APPARENTLY SO ..
HE'S CALLING THE SAND BASED ON A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE DURING THE GULF WAR IN IRAQ.
IRAQ IS THE LOCATION OF ONE OF THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS THAT DISAPPEARED INTO THE SAND
WHAT THE CHAIRMAN SAID, RIGHT? WHICH REMINDS ME...
SINCE JAPAN WENT ALONG WITH IT, WHAT WILL HAPPEN HERE?
SINCE AMERICA HAS BEEN THROWING THE DESERT COUNTRY OF IRAQ INTO A PERPETUAL STATE OF WAR, I WONDER IF THIS CASE PORTENDS THE DESTRUCTION OF AMERICA?

OKAY. IF ONE OF US LETS HER KNOW, I GUESS SHE CAN NOTIFY THE REST WITH TELEPATHY!
SHINPEI, IF YOU FIND THAT GUY, LET THE PRESIDENT KNOW RIGHT AWAY!
WE'LL CHECK THIS WAY!


THIS DEPARTMENT STORE'S ABOUT TO CLOSE. PROBABLY NOT MANY PEOPLE INSIDE

PANT PANT

I NEED TO GO SOMEWHERE FAST...
I NEED MONEY... THIS COUNTRY IS NO GOOD... THE SAND FOLLOWED ME HERE

EXCUSE ME SIR THE STORE IS CLOSING
!?
AH!?
SIR!?
I HAVE TO GO SOME WHERE THE SAND WON'T COME!!
THIS'S A HOLD-UP!

A SECURITY GUARD FROM THE STORE HAS FOLLOWED HIM TO THE ROOF!
HE SEIZED THE DAY'S PROCEEDS FROM THE CASHIER IN THE JEWELRY DEPARTMENT AND IS ATTEMPTING TO FLEE..
KERRY WHITMAN HAS INVADED THE OONA DEPARTMENT STORE AS IT WAS ABOUT TO CLOSE!
HERE'S A FRESH BULLETIN. THE MAN HAS TAKEN A FEMALE STORE CLERK HOSTAGE. HE'S BACKED INTO IN A CORNER OF THE ROOF!

HE IS ARMED WITH A HANDGUN AND HAS TAKEN A HOSTAGE! PROCEED WITH EXTREME CAUTION!
TO ALL PERSONNEL. THE SAND-MAN IS ON THE ROOF OF OONA DEPARTMENT STORE!
WOW!
IT'S THE TELEPATHY! IT'S CLANGING IN MY HEAD!
!
OWWW!
AH!?
HURRY, MR. INUI!
RIGHT! LET'S GO!
SHE SAYS HE'S ON THE ROOF OF OONA DEPARTMENT STORE.

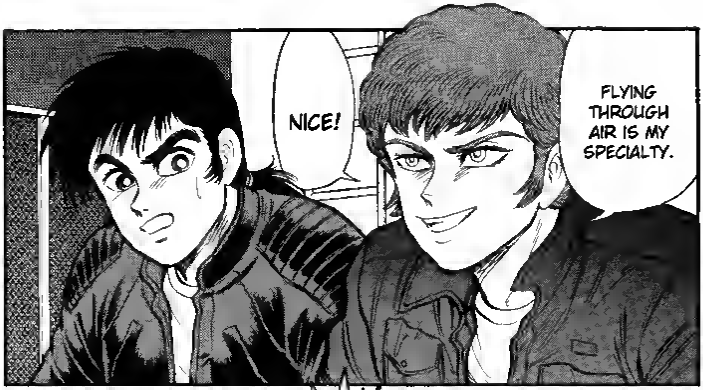
!
THE PERPETRATOR SURE KNOWS HOW TO USE THAT GUN...
WE'D LIKE TO EVACUATE HIM, BUT WE CAN'T GET CLOSE.
A MAN'S BEEN SHOT.
I'M WITH THE POLICE. WHAT'S THE SITUATION?
AH...

HE'S SAID THAT HE USED TO BE IN THE ARMY, SO KILLING WAS HIS JOB... HE SAYS HE'LL KILL AS MANY AS IT TAKES!
HE KEEPS YELLING FOR US TO CALL A CHOPPER TO LET HIM ESCAPE

A CHOPPER? GREAT...
HE'S DEMANDING A CHOPPER.

UMM... WHAT'S GOING ON?
IKEDA! CALL THE HELI-
IT IS TRUE HE WAS IN THE ARMY. IF WE DON'T DO AS HE SAYS...

IT'S TERRIBLE.
OH, HAGURO.
WHAT'S GOING ON?


NICE!
FLYING THROUGH AIR IS MY SPECIALTY.

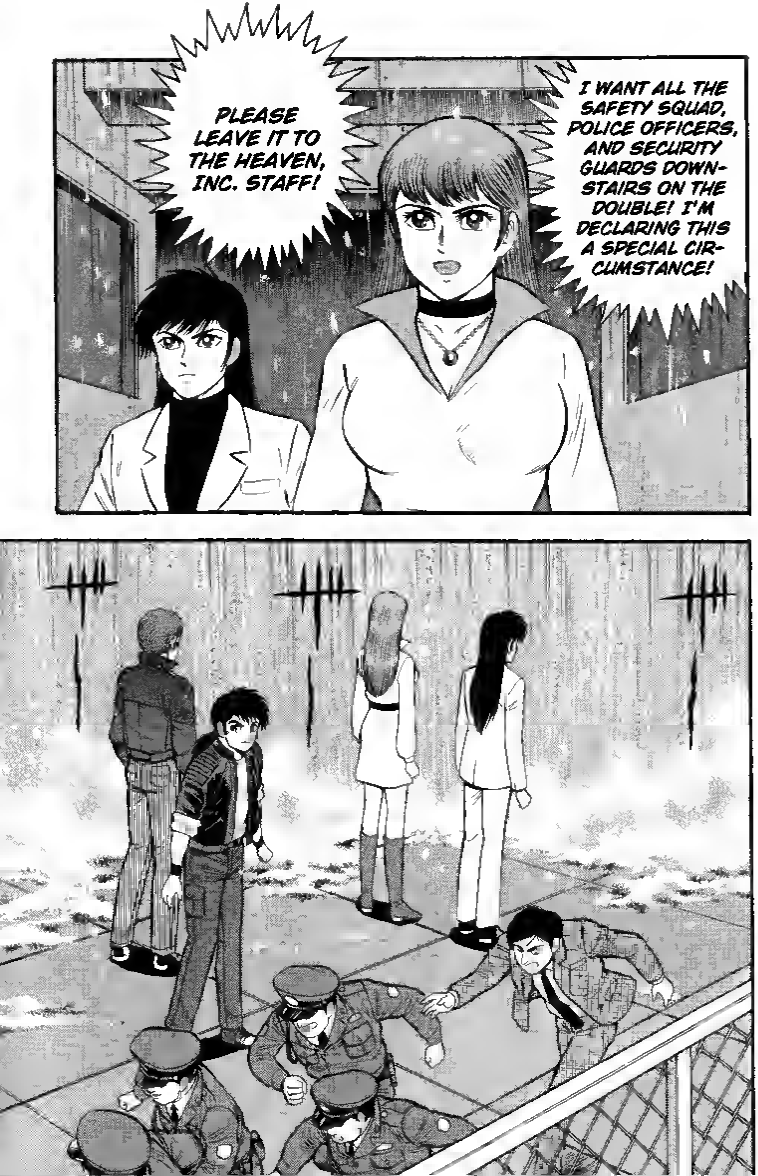
UWAAAAH!
AAH!
サラサラ

WHOAH!

SAND !?

IT'S LIKE RAIN! THE SAND IS FALLING LIKE RAIN!
AND IT'S ONLY ON THIS ROOF, SHINPEI!

PRESIDENT AMATSU!


PLEASE LEAVE IT TO THE HEAVEN, INC. STAFF!
I WANT ALL THE SAFETY SQUAD, POLICE OFFICERS, AND SECURITY GUARDS DOWNSTAIRS ON THE DOUBLE! I'M DECLARING THIS A SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE!

NO!
MA'AM, I'M GOING TO APPROACH HIM USING THE INVISIBILITY CLOAK!
AH!
YOUR FOOT-STEPS WILL SHOW IN THE FALLEN SAND!
I'M GOING IN! THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO DISCOVER THE THING IN HIS PSYCHE THAT'S CALLING THE SAND!
RIGHT, AOI! GIVE IT A TRY!
ウワアア
ワシ!!

Om
ओं
Ronomyuta
रुपाद्द्योत
Sowha
स्वाहा
Hidden Phoenix Penetr-ation!

ア ア ア
!

IT'S MIMICKING A HUMAN EYE!
UWAAAAAH!
IT'S INFESTED THIS MAN'S SOUL!
I'M GUILTY!
IT WAS WRONG!
MAGA-TSUHI!

I SEE! THIS GUY BURIED IRAQI TROOPS IN THE SAND!?
NO!
NO!
I JUST HAD THE IDEA. IT WAS MY COMMANDING OFFICER WHO BURIED THEM!
THE MAGA-TSUHI LOVE TO TORMENT A GUILTY CONSCIENCE!
THEY SNIFF OUT A PERSON'S DARKEST SECRETS AND POSSESS THEM!

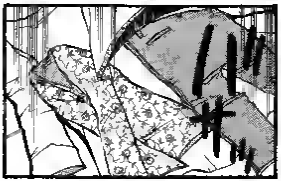
BUT WHERE IS THIS SAND FROM?
IRAQ!? DID HE SAY IRAQ!?
THAT MEANS THE SAND...
IS CONNECTED TO THE IRAQI DESERT FROM THE TIME OF THE GULF WAR!?

WHICH MEANS THE MAGATSUHI HAVE OPENED A SPACE-TIME TUNNEL BETWEEN THEN AND NOW!
AND IT CAN EVEN PROJECT SAND FROM INSIDE HIS SOUL TO THE OUTER WORLD!!
THIS IS BAD!
THE TUNNEL'S GETTING BIGGER... PEOPLE COULD START FALLING THROUGH FROM PRESENT DAY JAPAN INTO THE GULF WAR ERA'S IRAQI DESERT!

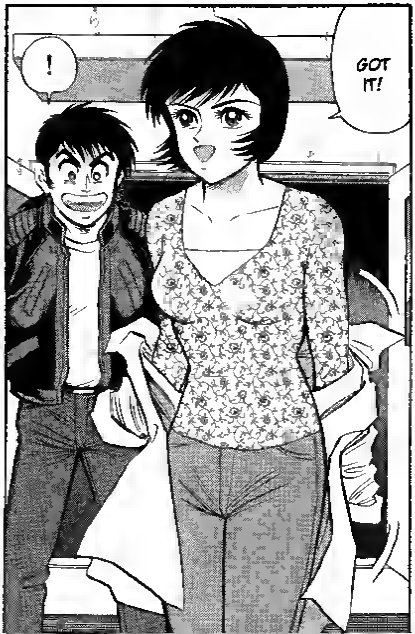
SPACE-TIME TUNNEL!? THE MAGATSUHI CREATED IT!?
SCARY!! COULD THIS AMERICAN SOLDIER COULD HAVE SUMMONED SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
THIS SAND IS AN OMEN !?
THE TUNNEL WILL ULTIMATELY EXPAND AROUND THIS MAN'S ENTIRE VICINITY !?
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DISPEL THE MAGATSUHI BY MYSELF!
IT'S INFESTED HIS SOUL SO DEEPLY!

I NEED YOU TO TAKE CARE OF MY BODY, AND I NEED YOU TO REMOVE THE HOSTAGE.
I'M GONNA TRY, BUT FIRST WE NEED EVERYONE TO EVACUATE THE AREA.
KURAMA!
YES?
RIGHT, AOI. WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
RIGHT!
HERE'S THE RESCUE PLAN!
OKAY, HAGURO, I NEED YOU TO WORK WITH KURAMA!

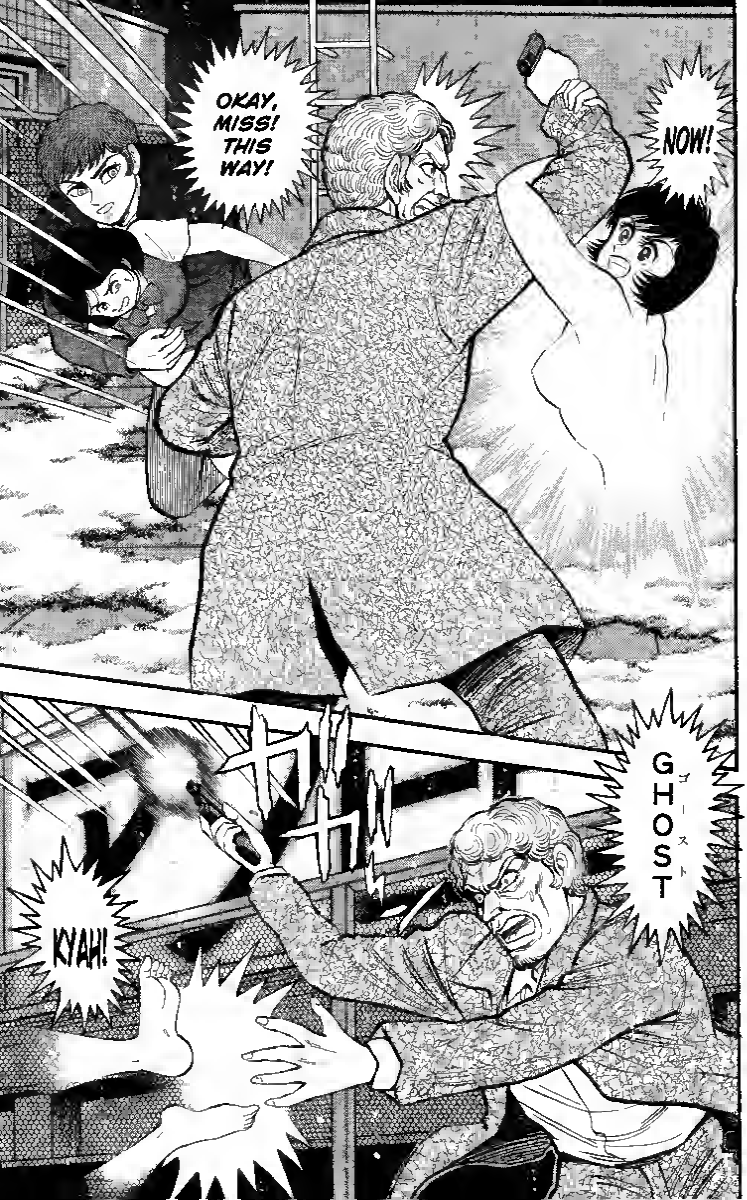
THERE'S SO MUCH SAND FALLING NOW YOUR FOOT-STEPS WON'T SHOW!
KURAMA! INVISI-BILITY CLOAK!
OK
FIRST, HAGURO, APPROACH THE CULPRIT SLOWLY AND TRY TO REASON WITH HIM.



SHE STRIPPED AND DISAPPEARED AT EXACTLY THE SAME TIME!
DISAPP-EARED!
PFFFT.


!
GOT IT!

STAY BACK! I'LL SHOOT!
HEY! HEY! RELAX!
I'M HERE TO NEGOTI-ATE...
YOU WANTED A CHOPPER, RIGHT?
I'M HERE TO TALK ABOUT IT
SHUT IT! STAY AWAY!
WAH!?
WHAT!?


OKAY, MISS! THIS WAY!
NOW!
GHOST (ゴースト)
KYAH!

OKAY! HOS-TAGE AWAY!
OKAY! EVERYONE EVACUATE!!
I'M GOING IN!
RIN!
!?
キョロキョロ

RET-SU!
KAI!
JIN!
BYOH!
TOH!
SHA!
!?
MEDDLE-SOME SHIT DOG!
CEASE!

HE'S NOT MAGATSUHI! HE'S A LIVING GHOST LIKE ME!!
LEAVE HIM BE!
WH-
WHO ARE YOU?

WE'VE MET BEFORE, AOI KATSURAGI!!
IT'S BEEN SO MANY DECADES, I'M KINDA NOSTALGIC!!
A... AMON! AKIRA AMON!
GRAAA

DEVIL WOLF!

うわあ
あーっ
WHAT IS IT!?
AOI!?

THE DEVIL WOLF, AKIRA AMON IS CLOSE BY!!
WOLF!
I WAS BLOCKED!
HUH!?

AH...AH...AH!
ズ
ズ
ズ
ズ
ズ

UW-AAH!!

UW-AH!
FOR-GIVE ME!
WAAH!
ALONG WITH THE SAND!
THERE'S LESS AND LESS OF IT!
HE'S GONE!!

HE WAS SWALLOWED UP BY THE SPACE-TIME TUNNEL.
YEAH.
PROB-ABLY.
!?
AMON! AKIRA AMON!
DEVIL WOLF!

BACK THEN!

MAY I ASK YOU ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED BACK THEN?
天空社
天空

THE CASE OF THE AMERICAN SOLDIER AND THE "SAND WITCH" SAND-THROWING HAG

I WASN'T ABLE TO HELP MUCH.
EVEN THOUGH I WAS RIGHT THERE, I FEEL LIKE I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING THAT HAPPENED.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
YOU GOT MY HEFTY CADAVER OUT AWAY FROM ALL THAT FALL-ING SAND!

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK!
NO, NO, I WAS JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS!
SO, NOW THANK YOU, INUI!
I NEVER THANKED YOU FOR THAT!
LUMM...
BUT... SOFTER THAN A MAN...
I HAVE A MUSCULAR BUILD AND I WEIGH MORE LIKE A MAN...
REALLY?
BUT I WAS KINDA GLAD YOU WEREN'T HEAVY AT ALL...
EXACTLY WHAT SORT OF POWER IS YOUR PSYCHE DIVE?
I'D SEEN IT BEFORE, BUT...
SO, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW?

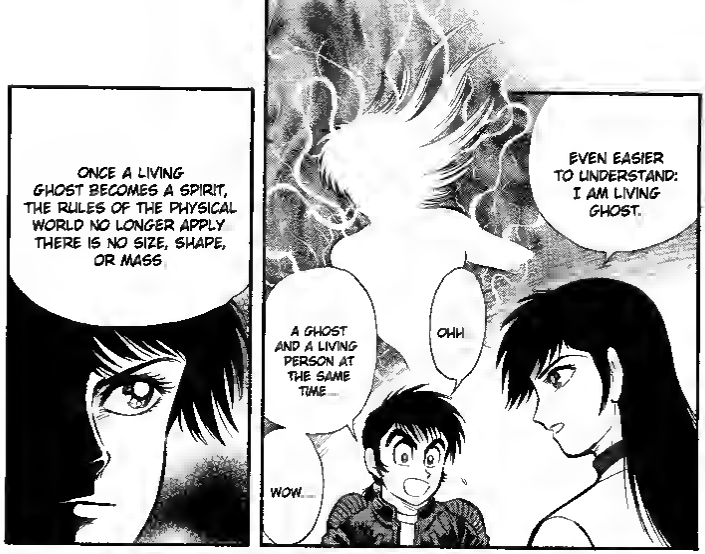
WHEN IT IS TIME TO BE REBORN, THE FRUITS OF ONE'S PRIOR MATERIAL LIFE ARE...
UPON ENTERING THE SPIRIT WORLD, THE ASTRAL BODY SEPARATES FROM THE SPIRIT BODY, AND THE MEMORIES ARE LOST...
AH!
JU...JUST A MINUTE, PLEASE!

According to the famous German philosopher and founder of anthroposophy, Rudolph Steiner, humans simultaneously exist in three planes: the material world, the astral world, and the spirit world. When they die, they leave their material bodies behind and become spirits.

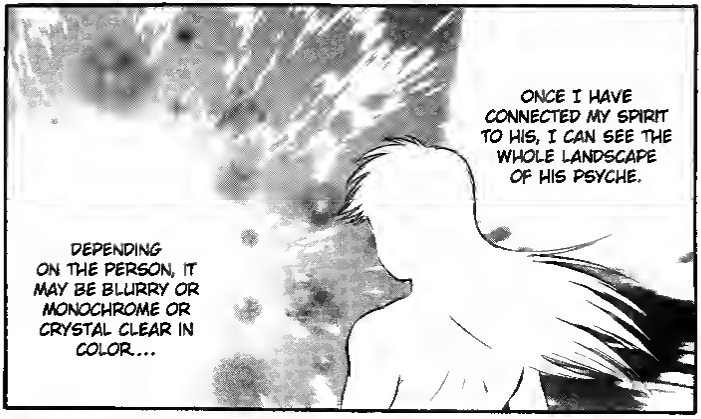
WHAT EXACTLY IS "ANTHRO-POSOPHY?"
UMM
THROUGH MY FIELD WORK IN FOLKLORE I'VE COME TO ENJOY STUDYING TRADITIONAL JAPANESE SPIRIT MONSTERS.

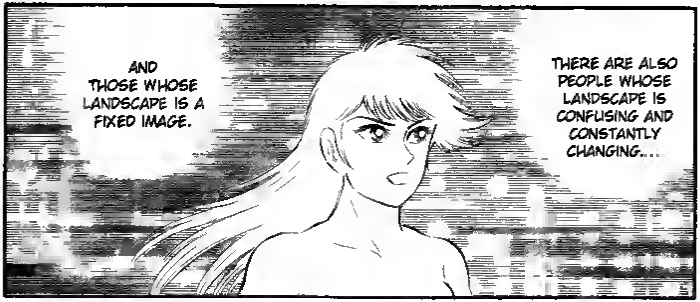
I'M MORE INTERESTED IN THE NATURE OF YOUR POWER!
IF IT'S RELIGIOUS TALK, I'M NOT REALLY INTO IT...
I'M TRYING TO EXPLAIN. IT IS NOT ABOUT RELIGION. IT IS ABOUT THE SPIRIT WORLD

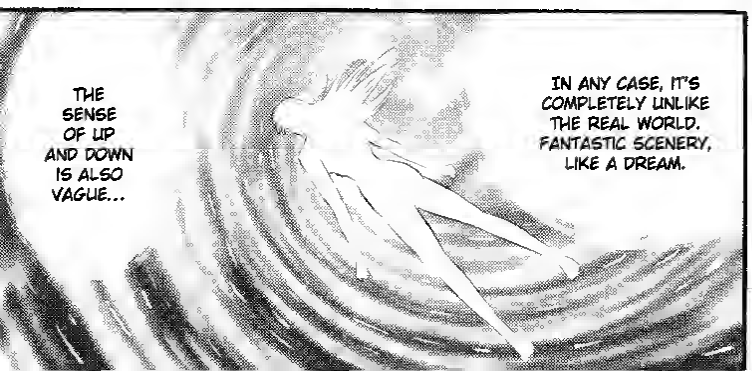
IT BEGAN AS A RELIGION
A RELIGION AFTER ALL
HUMAN'S HAVE A STRANGE MYSTIC WISDOM. . BY MEANS OF THIS IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO DIRECTLY SEE GODS. THIS IS ANTHROPOSOPHY IN A NUTSHELL
WELL, IN ANY CASE, MY POWER.
BUT STEINER'S THINKING GREW TO ENCOMPASS SCHOLARLY AND PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS AS WELL
IF YOU WON'T ACCEPT THAT HUMAN EXISTENCE EXTENDS TO THE SPIRIT PLANE AS WELL AS THE MATERIAL BODY, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND MY EXPLANATION.
NORMALLY, WHEN A PERSON DIES, THEIR SPIRIT SEPARATES FROM THE ASTRAL BODY AS WELL
I AM ABLE TO SEPARATE MY SPIRIT FROM MY BODY AT WILL!
IN OTHER WORDS, I CAN GO OUT OF BODY!


ONCE A LIVING GHOST BECOMES A SPIRIT, THE RULES OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD NO LONGER APPLY. THERE IS NO SIZE, SHAPE, OR MASS.
EVEN EASIER TO UNDERSTAND: I AM LIVING GHOST.
OHH
A GHOST AND A LIVING PERSON AT THE SAME TIME...
WOW...

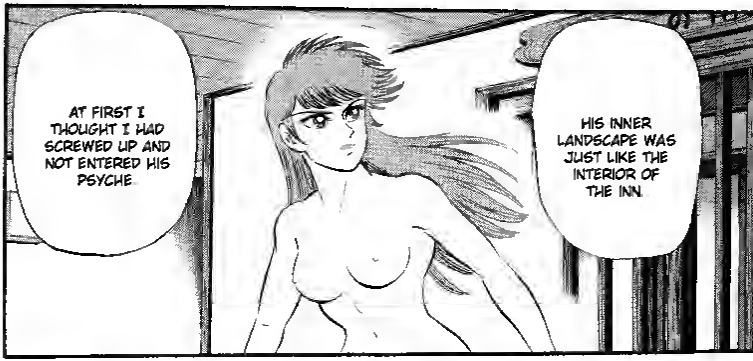
ONCE I ENTER SPIRIT FORM, I CAN ENTER INSIDE ANOTHER PERSON! THAT IS, I CAN JOIN TOGETHER WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE OTHER PERSON!
IN AN INSTANT I PERCEIVE HIS TRUE CHARACTER, MEMORIES, AND MENTAL STATE.
AN AMAZING POWER...


ONCE I HAVE CONNECTED MY SPIRIT TO HIS, I CAN SEE THE WHOLE LANDSCAPE OF HIS PSYCHE.
DEPENDING ON THE PERSON, IT MAY BE BLURRY OR MONOCHROME OR CRYSTAL CLEAR IN COLOR....


AND THOSE WHOSE LANDSCAPE IS A FIXED IMAGE.
THERE ARE ALSO PEOPLE WHOSE LANDSCAPE IS CONFUSING AND CONSTANTLY CHANGING...

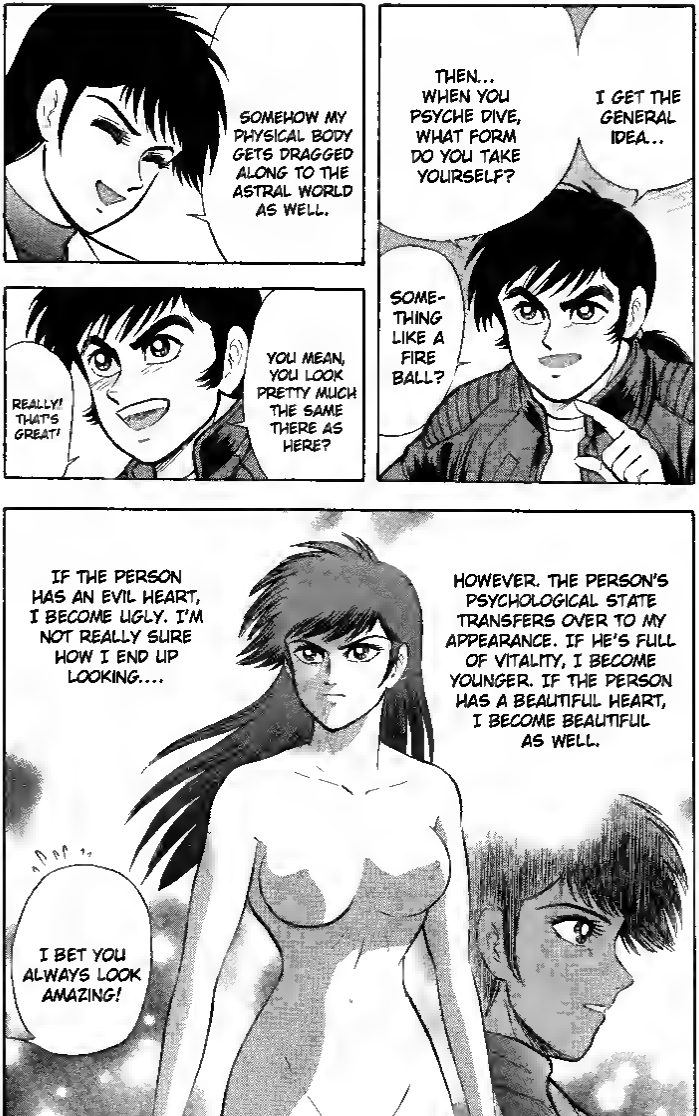

THE SENSE OF UP AND DOWN IS ALSO VAGUE...
IN ANY CASE, IT'S COMPLETELY UNLIKE THE REAL WORLD. FANTASTIC SCENERY, LIKE A DREAM.

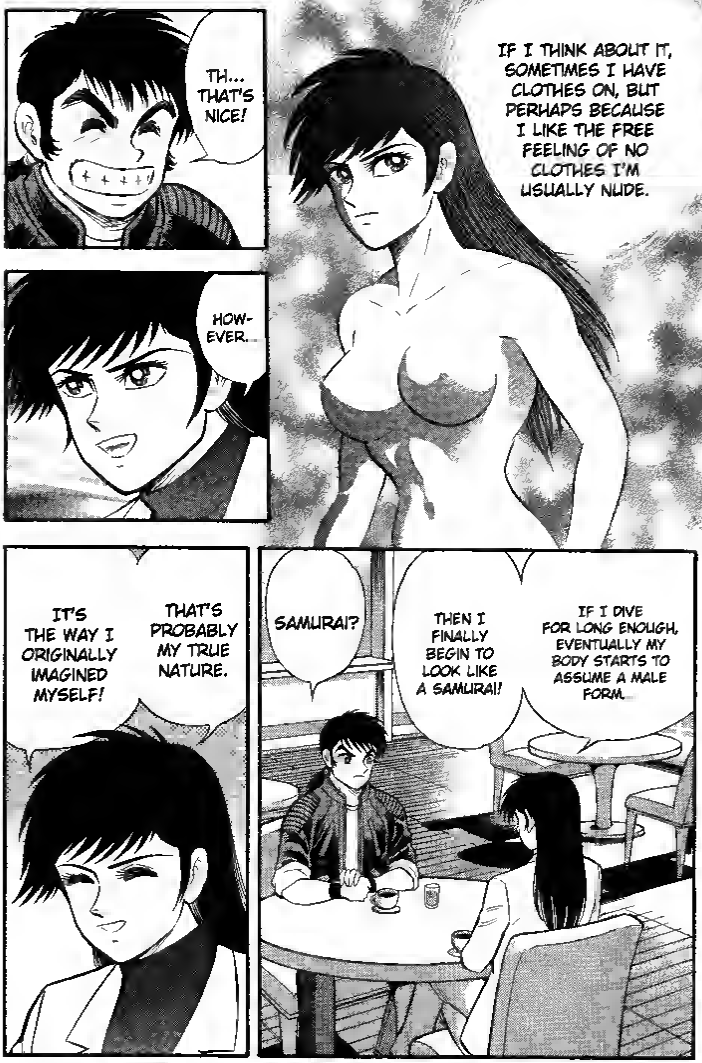
* Spirit monster that Shinpei encountered in the village of Hishuzume in Saitama Prefecture



OR BUILDING A SNOWMAN
THERE WERE IMAGES OF HIM AS A YOUNGSTER PLAYING IN THE RIVER
BUT AS SOON AS I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW, I UNDERSTOOD IT WAS HIS INNER LANDSCAPE.

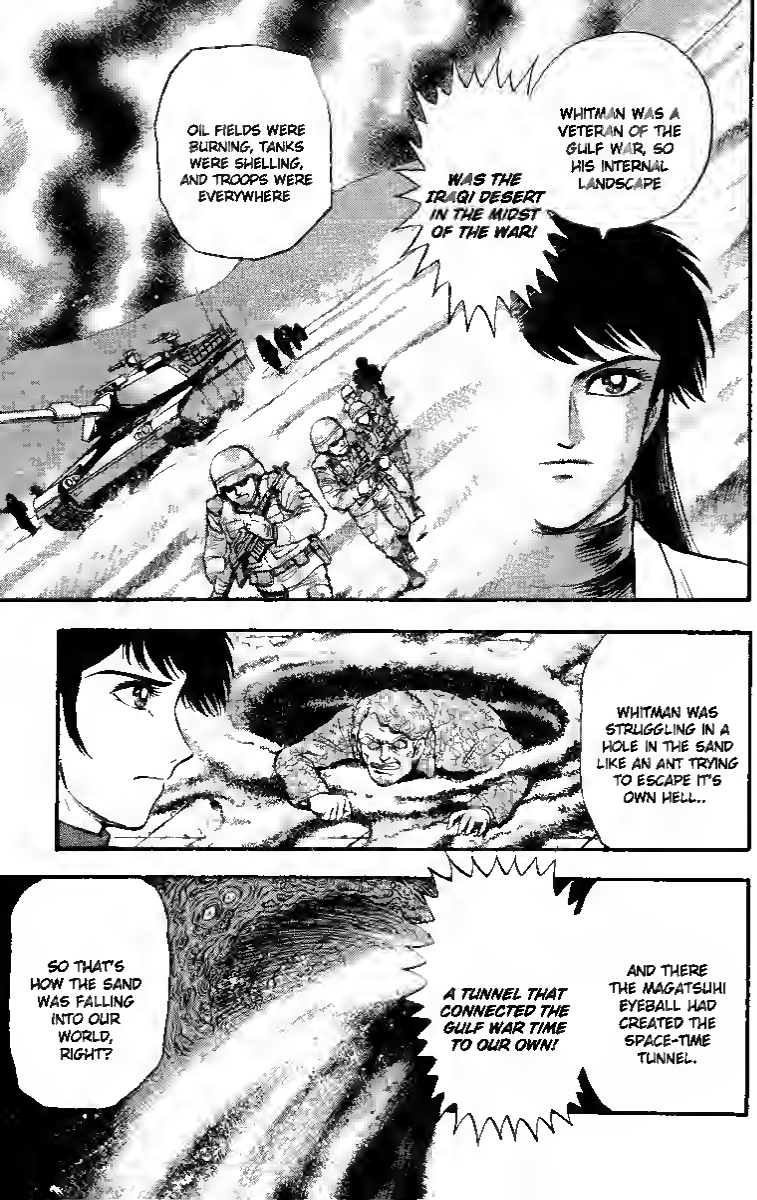
OF COURSE! HE PROBABLY CONSTRUCTED IT HIMSELF. THAT'S WHERE HIS STRONGEST FEELINGS WOULD BE.
AND THEN... THE INN KEEPER HIMSELF WAS IN THE OUTDOOR BATH.
BASICALLY, THAT INN AND ITS SURROUNDING WERE HIS ENTIRE WORLD.
HE WAS THERE, HALF-SUBMERGED. HE HAD FAINTED... THE STEAM AND COMPLETELY ENGULFED HIM. IF YOU LOOKED CLOSELY, YOU COULD SEE IT WAS THE MAGATSUHI.


SOMEHOW MY PHYSICAL BODY GETS DRAGGED ALONG TO THE ASTRAL WORLD AS WELL.
I GET THE GENERAL IDEA...
THEN... WHEN YOU PSYCHE DIVE, WHAT FORM DO YOU TAKE YOURSELF?
SOME-THING LIKE A FIRE BALL?
YOU MEAN, YOU LOOK PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THERE AS HERE?
REALLY! THAT'S GREAT!
IF THE PERSON HAS AN EVIL HEART, I BECOME UGLY. I'M NOT REALLY SURE HOW I END UP LOOKING....
HOWEVER. THE PERSON'S PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE TRANSFERS OVER TO MY APPEARANCE. IF HE'S FULL OF VITALITY, I BECOME YOUNGER. IF THE PERSON HAS A BEAUTIFUL HEART, I BECOME BEAUTIFUL AS WELL.
I BET YOU ALWAYS LOOK AMAZING!


TH... THAT'S NICE!
IF I THINK ABOUT IT, SOMETIMES I HAVE CLOTHES ON, BUT PERHAPS BECAUSE I LIKE THE FREE FEELING OF NO CLOTHES I'M USUALLY NUDE.
HOW-EVER...
IT'S THE WAY I ORIGINALLY IMAGINED MYSELF!
THAT'S PROBABLY MY TRUE NATURE.
SAMURAI?
THEN I FINALLY BEGIN TO LOOK LIKE A SAMURAI!
IF I DIVE FOR LONG ENOUGH, EVENTUALLY MY BODY STARTS TO ASSUME A MALE FORM...

SO, WHEN THAT AMERICAN SOLDIER WAS SWALLOWED BY THE SAND, WHO WAS THE GUY WHO APPEARED AFTER-WARDS?
YOU MEAN AMON..
WHO IS HE...?

I THINK YOU SAID HE BLOCKED YOUR PSYCHE DIVE
HE CAME IN AS WELL ...
HE WAS THERE WITH ME IN THE SOLDIERS PSYCHIC LAND-SCAPE: ANOTHER LIVING GHOST!
AND IN THE FORM OF A WEREWOLF!


WHITMAN WAS A VETERAN OF THE GULF WAR, SO HIS INTERNAL LANDSCAPE
OIL FIELDS WERE BURNING, TANKS WERE SHELLING, AND TROOPS WERE EVERYWHERE
WAS THE IRAQI DESERT IN THE MIDST OF THE WAR!
WHITMAN WAS STRUGGLING IN A HOLE IN THE SAND LIKE AN ANT TRYING TO ESCAPE IT'S OWN HELL..
AND THERE THE MAGATSUHI EYEBALL HAD CREATED THE SPACE-TIME TUNNEL.
A TUNNEL THAT CONNECTED THE GULF WAR TIME TO OUR OWN!
SO THAT'S HOW THE SAND WAS FALLING INTO OUR WORLD, RIGHT?

AMON APPEARED AS I WAS TRYING TO CLOSE THE TUNNEL!
RIGHT. IT WAS COMING THROUGH THE TUNNEL CREATED BY THE MAGATSUHI
AND THEREBY FALLING IN PRESENT DAY TOKYO!
AKIRA AMON!
WHAT IS HE?
A FIEND LIKE A WERE-WOLF!
DEVIL WOLF!

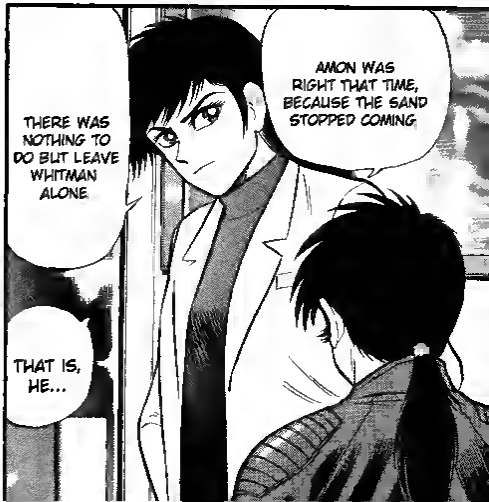
THEY'RE ALL EN-EMIES!
A FOE!
WE ARE FROM THE CELESTIAL FOX; THE HOUNDS OF HEAVEN. THEY ARE SNAKES; THE VIPERS OF HEAVEN!
MORE THAN ONE.
RIGHT.
ALL....!? THERE'S MORE THAN ONE!?
MORE THAN US. AND THEY'RE ANCIENT...

MAY I ASK YOU SOMETHING ELSE?

SN.... VIPERS OF HEAVEN !?
YOU MEAN?
THAT THEY ARE DESCENDANTS OF THOSE THAT CAME OUT OF SPACE LIKE THE PEOPLE OF THE CELESTIAL FOX DID!
PRETTY MUCH!

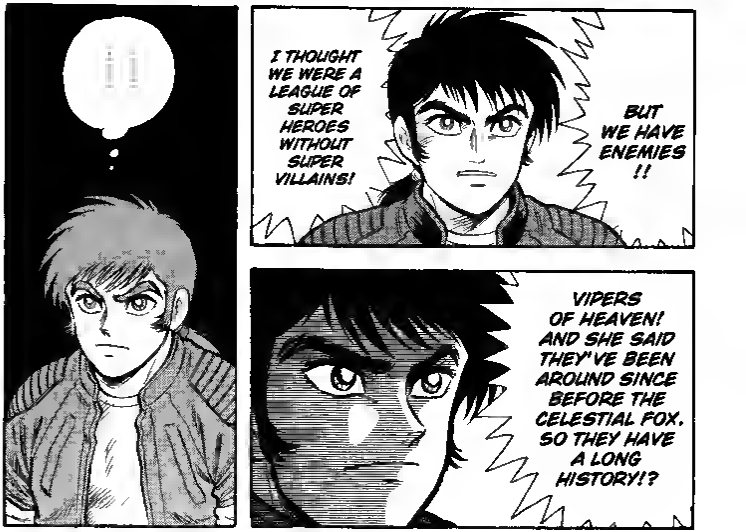
WHAT BECAME OF HIM?
THAT WHITMAN GUY WAS SWALLOWED BY THE SAND

HE WAS SUFFERING FROM THE WEIGHT OF THE DEEDS HE COMMITTED IN THE GULF WAR!
WANTED TO DIE!


THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT LEAVE WHITMAN ALONE.
AMON WAS RIGHT THAT TIME, BECAUSE THE SAND STOPPED COMING.
THAT IS, HE...

HE WANTED TO RETURN TO THE DESERT AND DIE THERE, AND THE MAGATSUHI.
THAT WAS HOW THE MAGATSUHI POSSESSED HIS HEART.
HE WAS CONSUMED WITH FEELINGS OF REMORSE AND PUNISHING HIMSELF.
SO WHAT HAPPENED?
HE DIED.
HE DIED IN THE TIME BACK THEN.
HIS NAME MAY EVEN BE IN THE OFFICIAL CASUALTY LISTS
ANY RECORD OF HIS ACTIVITIES SINCE THEN HAVE PROBABLY VANISHED.
EVEN THE RECORD OF HIM EVER ENTERING JAPAN.

AH... OF COURSE EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS HEAVEN, INC JOB WAS GONNA BE COMPLETELY CONFUSING DANG!


I THOUGHT WE WERE A LEAGUE OF SUPER HEROES WITHOUT SUPER VILLAINS!
BUT WE HAVE ENEMIES !!
VIPERS OF HEAVEN! AND SHE SAID THEY'VE BEEN AROUND SINCE BEFORE THE CELESTIAL FOX. SO THEY HAVE A LONG HISTORY!?

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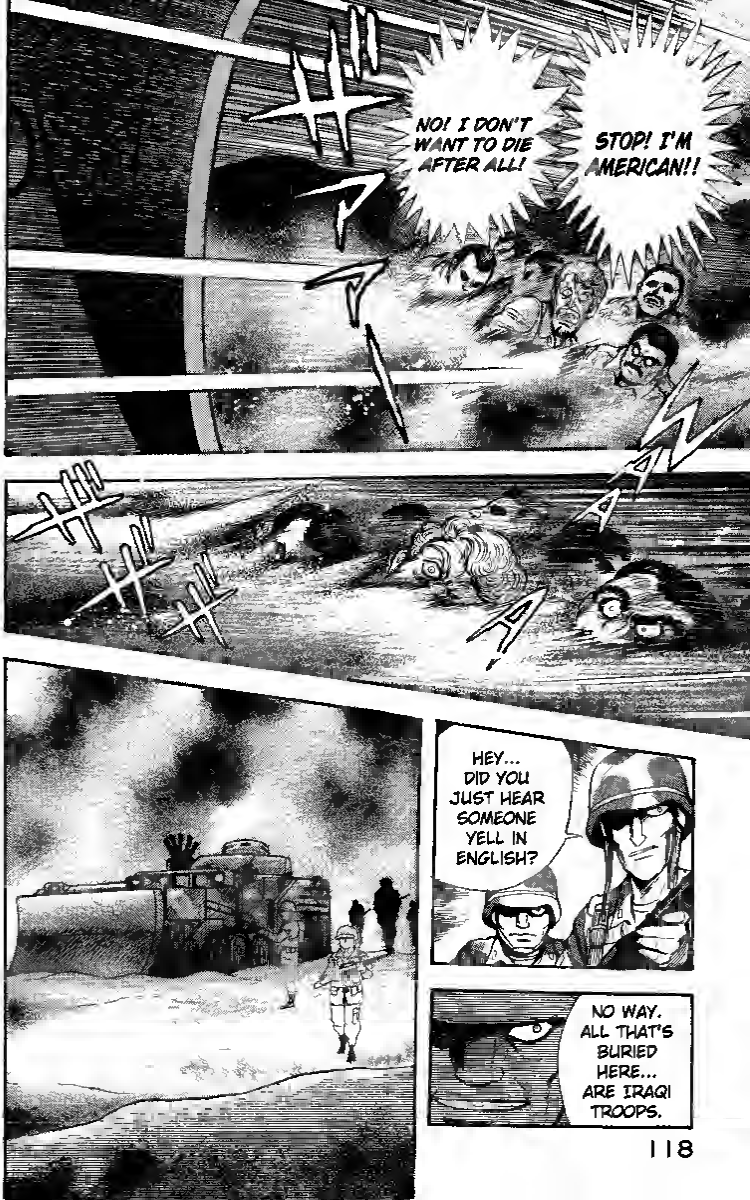
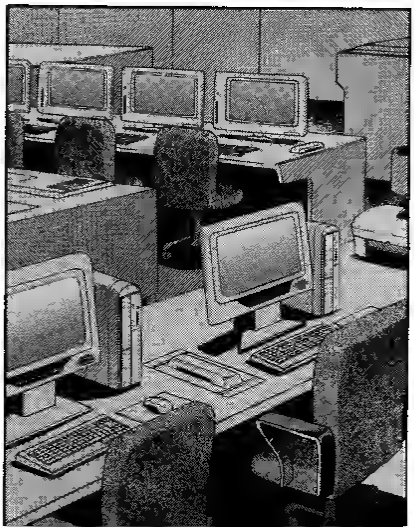
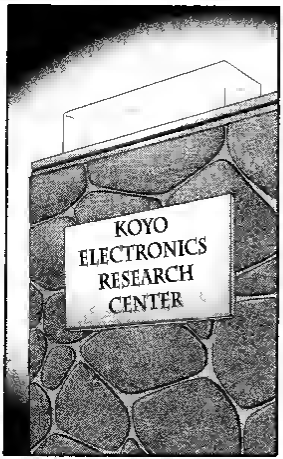
AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!
HA!?


NO! I DON'T WANT TO DIE AFTER ALL!
STOP! I'M AMERICAN!!
HEY... DID YOU JUST HEAR SOMEONE YELL IN ENGLISH?
NO WAY. ALL THAT'S BURIED HERE... ARE IRAQI TROOPS.

Chapter 5:
Rokurokubi

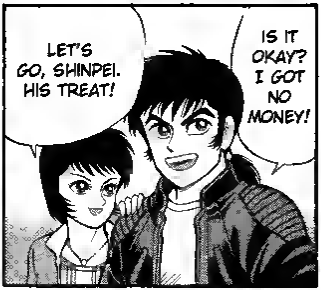


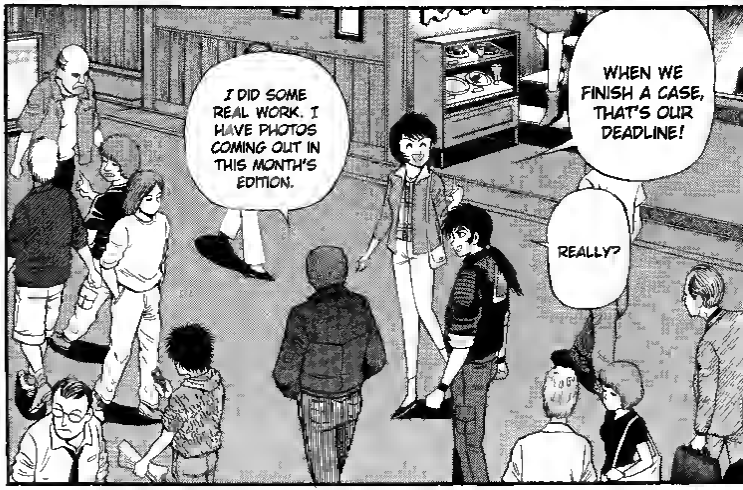

KOYO
ELECTRONICS
RESEARCH
CENTER

ゴト
ゴト
HEH
HEH
HEH

SHINPEI'S FINALLY ADJUSTED TO LIFE AT HEAVEN, INC. AND THE DEADLINE IS PAST IT'S TIME TO RELAX
YOU SAY DEADLINE, BUT WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE MAGAZINE
IT'S OKAY!

C'MON SHINPEI. LET'S GO TO ANOTHER.


IS IT OKAY? I GOT NO MONEY!
LET'S GO, SHINPEI. HIS TREAT!


WHEN WE FINISH A CASE, THAT'S OUR DEADLINE!
I DID SOME REAL WORK. I HAVE PHOTOS COMING OUT IN THIS MONTH'S EDITION.
REALLY?

AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT GUTS!
EVEN IF YOU HAVEN'T DEVELOPED ANY USEFUL TENGU POWERS, SHINPEI
YEP!
REALLY?
CHEERS!
IT PAINS ME TO SAY...
AH... BUT I'M NOT MUCH HELP...
AHAHA! REALLY!
AT HEAVEN, INC WE ALWAYS DEAL WITH SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE AND I LIKE THAT YOU ALWAYS DIVE IN HEAD-FIRST.
BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK I'M HEAVEN, INC MATERIAL?

ST 82
DEVIL M
YOU STILL THINK YOU'RE JUST A NORMAL PERSON?
YOU MEAN,
UMMM... I GUESS...

IF YOU HAD FAITH IN HER, SUCH THOUGHTS WOULD NEVER CROSS YOUR MIND...
YOU STILL DON'T TRUST THE PREZ?

SUDDENLY YOU GUYS COME ALONG TALKING ABOUT THE CELESTIAL FOX.
I WAS NEVER RAISED AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN AN UTTERLY NORMAL PERSON...

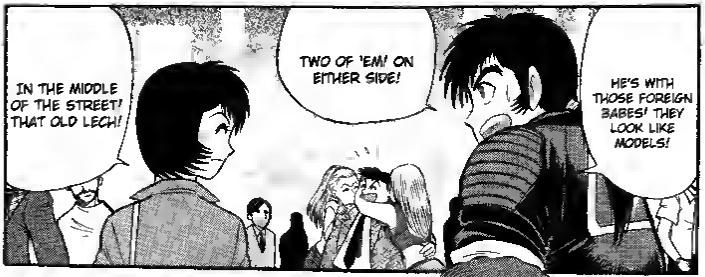
PPT.
IT'S SORTA...

BUT?
SUPPOSEDLY THERE WAS A STRANGE INCIDENT, BUT...
SPEAKING OF WHICH, SHE CAME IN TODAY, BUT WE DIDN'T HEAR A PEEP OUT OF HER.
INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE?
HE SAID IT'S NOT CLEAR YET IF THIS CASE REQUIRES THE INVOLVEMENT OF HEAVEN, INC
I GOT THIS FROM MR AKIBA
LOOKS TO BE INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE!
WHAT SORT OF CASE?

INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE IS...
STEALING TRADE SECRETS FROM A COMPANY.
IS THAT REALLY SOMETHING WITHIN OUR REPERTOIRE?
I'M NOT REALLY UP TO DATE ON IT, BUT...
THERE WERE APPARENTLY SOME ODD CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVED!
THERE'S A SECRET ROOM...

A SECRET ROOM?
THERE'S NO SIGN OF ENTRY. BUT SOMETHING WAS STOLEN ANYWAY.
HUH?

HEY, ISN'T THAT MR. IZUMO !?

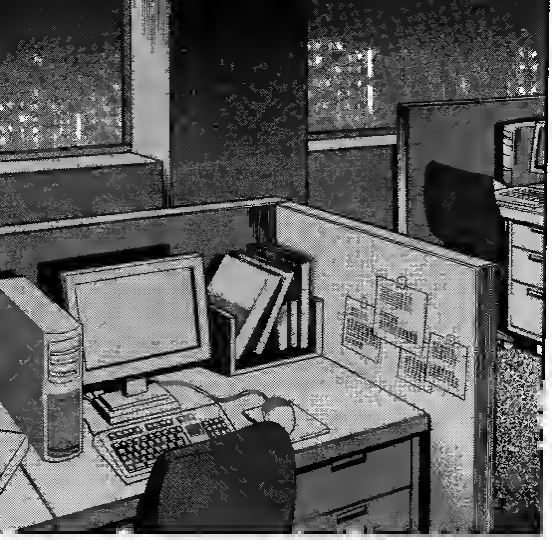

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET! THAT OLD LECH!
TWO OF 'EM! ON EITHER SIDE!
HE'S WITH THOSE FOREIGN BABES! THEY LOOK LIKE MODELS!

.....
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! WHY THAT GUY?
LOOKS LIKE HE USES IT FOR PLAY MORE THAN WORK—
THAT'S IZUMO'S POWER.

HUH!?
YOU'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH, SHINPEI.
WHAT KIND OF POWER DOES IZUMO HAVE?
BUT... WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?
ハヌマン!!
DID SOMETHING FLY OVER?
JUST NOW... SOME-THING...
HMM...
WHAT IS IT, SHINPEI?

MAYBE A NEWBIE TENGU'S HALLU-CINATION?
WAS IT YOUR IMAGINATION?
MAYBE..
A few hours earlier
MUST BE TOUGH TO WORK SO LATE!
SEE YOU TOMORROW!
AH, THANKS. I END UP WORKING LATE A LOT.

ガサガサ
THE REST IS UP TO YOU...
HEHEHE...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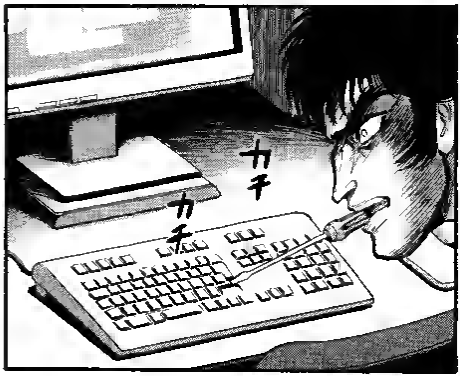
WITH THIS PROGRAM I CAN PROBABLY TAKE OUT THE GUARD...
カシャカシャ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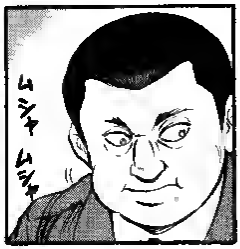
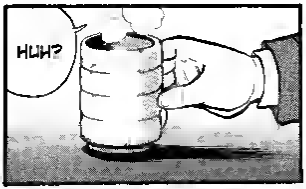
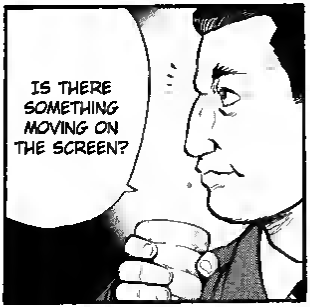
SIGN SECURITY STATON







HERE
カチャ
BETTER CHECK JUST TO BE SURE, THOUGH...
SEEMS LIKE IT WAS PROBABLY JUST BECAUSE THE COMPUTER MONITOR WAS ON.
コッコッ
SEEMS LIKE NOBODY'S HERE.
HMM
!?
JUST A COMPUTER SOMEBODY FORGOT TO TURN OFF...?

IS SOMEONE THERE!?
WHO'S THERE!?
!?
GOOD EEEVENING!!

ANY TIME NOW.
カラン

HERE HE IS
WELL? DID IT GO ALRIGHT?

I GOT THE DATA ALRIGHT.
YOU GOT IT!
BUT...
ポイ
A SECURITY GUARD FOUND ME.
DID HE SEE YOU!?
THERE WAS A LITTLE PROBLEM.
PROBLEM?
SO I KILLED HIM!

Y-YOU K-KILLED HIM...?
WE CAN'T LET ANYONE SEE THIS BODY, RIGHT?

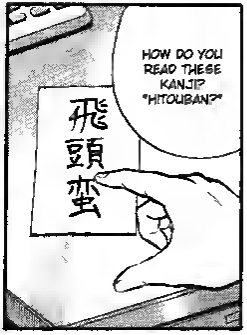
STILL...
AH... HMM...

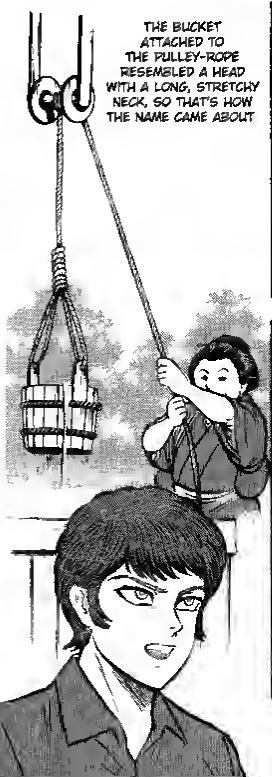
I DIDN'T WANT TO BUT I HAD NO CHOICE.
RIGHT?

IT AIN'T LIKE YOU KILLED HIM.
WHAT'RE YA GETTIN' SCARED NOW FOR?
ME, TOO. I WAS SENT OUT BY THE CLEANING COMPANY...
BUT THE POLICE WILL BE SERIOUS ABOUT A MURDER INVESTIGATION
WAIT, YOU...
YOU'RE JUST BEIN' CHICKEN!
SHIT
IT COULD BE A MAJOR PAIN...
BUT I'VE BEEN IN THE SLAMMER
NO, NO!
O' COURSE NOT!
YOU AIN'T THINKIN' OF SELLIN' ME OUT JUST TO KEEP YOUR RECORD CLEAN, ARE YA!?

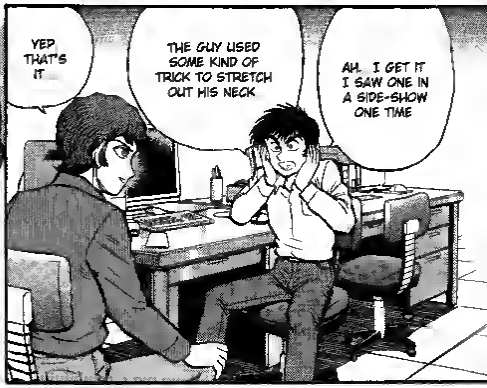
WHEN YOU GOT THAT BODY AND BROKE OUT, DID I TELL ANYONE!?
WE WERE IN THE SLAMMER TOGETHER. WE'RE PALS, RIGHT!?
THAT BODY'S REALLY GROSS...
FINE AS LONG AS YOU DON'T DOUBLE-CROSS ME
IT'LL BE YOUR HEAD IF YOU DO!
SHUT UP! EVEN THOUGH IT'S SO CONVENIENT!

"ROKURO ?"
THAT'S A WAY OF WRITING "ROKUROKUBI."

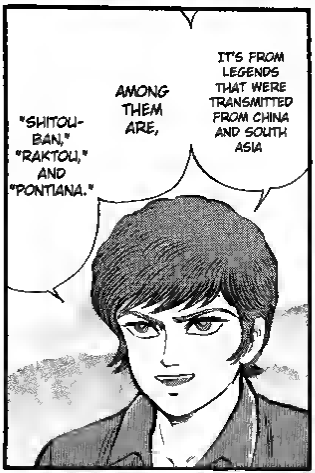

HOW DO YOU READ THESE KANJI? "HITOUBAN?"
飛頭蛮


THE BUCKET ATTACHED TO THE PULLEY-ROPE RESEMBLED A HEAD WITH A LONG, STRETCHY NECK, SO THAT'S HOW THE NAME CAME ABOUT

A ROKURO IS A PULLEY-ROPE ATTACHED TO A WELL
"KUBI" OF COURSE MEANS "HEAD."


AH. I GET IT I SAW ONE IN A SIDE-SHOW ONE TIME
THE GUY USED SOME KIND OF TRICK TO STRETCH OUT HIS NECK
YEP. THAT'S IT.

THE STANDARD IMAGE IN JAPAN IS OF A HEAD THAT STRETCHES OUT ON THE NECK, BUT ORIGINALLY IT COULD COME OUT ENTIRELY AND FLY THROUGH THE AIR!


IT'S FROM LEGENDS THAT WERE TRANSMITTED FROM CHINA AND SOUTH ASIA
AMONG THEM ARE,
"SHITOU-BAN," "RAKTOU," AND "PONTIANA."

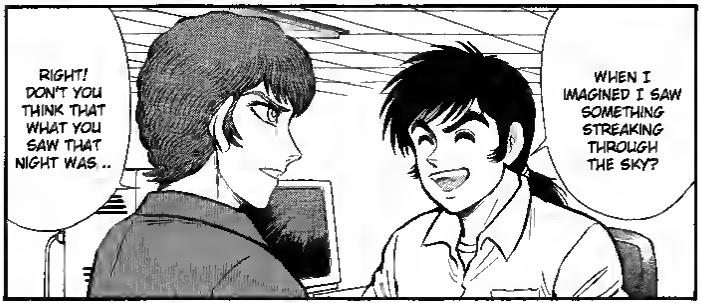
SPEAKING OF THE JAPANESE IMAGE AND THE ORIGINAL IMAGE, WASN'T IT ALWAYS A JAPANESE SPIRIT MONSTER?
THAT IS, I THOUGHT IT NEVER REALLY EXISTED ELSE-WHERE.
MMM-HMM. CHINA... IT WAS IMPORTED FROM CHINA...

THE LEGENDS ABOUT ROKUROKUBI IN JAPAN TEND TO ORIGINATE IN THE KYUSHU AND SHIKOKU AREAS. LATER THEY SPREAD THROUGH THE URBAN AREAS OF THE EDO PERIOD
ACCORDING TO THE "KOKON HYAKU MONOGATARI HYOBAN" (A COLLECTION OF EDO PERIOD TALES) THERE WAS A MAN NAMED OSHOU SETZUKAN WHO WAS MAKING A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH THE WEST COUNTRY. HE STOPPED OVERNIGHT AT A PRIVATE DWELLING IN A VILLAGE IN THE PROVINCE OF HIGO (NOW KUMAMOTO PREFECTURE)
IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, WHILE HE WAS HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING
THE HEAD OF HIS HOST'S WIFE
EMERGED FROM HER BODY!
!?

OSHOU STAYED AWAKE RECITING BUDDHIST PRAYERS UNTIL JUST BEFORE DAWN, WHEN THE WOMAN'S HEAD RETURNED AND RECONNECTED WITH HER BODY
HE SAW IT THEN EXIT THROUGH A BROKEN WINDOW SLAT.
THE HEAD AND NECK CAME COMPLETELY OUT! HOW HORRIFYING!
IS THIS WHAT THEY CALL A ROKUROKUBI?
OSHOU WAS UNCERTAIN WHETHER TO SAY ANYTHING TO HIS HOST - DECIDING IT WOULD BE PRUDENT NOT TO STIR UP A FUSS, HE ROSE AND LEFT WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING.
IN THE MORNING WHEN HE SAW HER, SHE SEEMED PERFECTLY NORMAL.

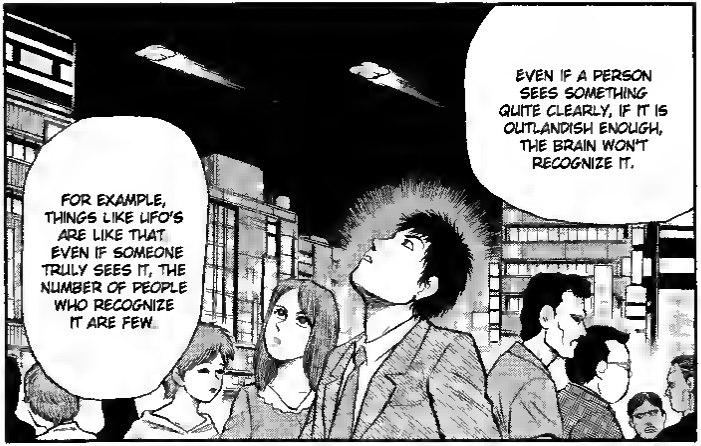
IT'S SAID THAT THE SINEWS OF THE NECKS OF ROKUROKUBI ARE PURPLE, SO IF YOU SEE A WOMAN LIKE THAT, BE CAREFUL
PREY !?
AFTER PEOPLE HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP, THE HEAD EMERGES AND AND GOES IN SEARCH OF PREY ..
OOF.
IT'S SAID MOST ROKUROKUBI ARE WOMEN. THEIR PREFERENCE IS TO DRAIN THE LIFE ENERGY FROM MEN
THERE ARE ALSO SOME ROKUROKUBI WHO STRETCH THEIR NECKS OUT AT NIGHT BUT OTHERWISE DON'T HARM ANYONE...
THE NECK OF A ROKUROKUBI EXTENDS OUT ONLY AT NIGHT. DURING THEY DAY THEY ARE INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM NORMAL PEOPLE. SOME ACCOUNTS SAY THAT THE NECK ONLY GETS LONG WHEN THEY ARE SOUND ASLEEP, SO THAT THE SOUL CAN SLIP OUT.
HOLD ON A MINUTE!
HO-
IN THAT CASE, THERE IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, RIGHT?
SOUL .. SLIP... OUT ..?
HMM

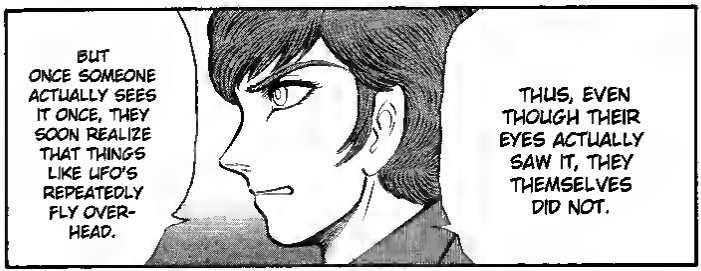
THE OTHER DAY? YOU MEAN WHEN WERE OUT HAVING DRINKS?
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU SAW SOME-THING OTHER DAY?
WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH ME?
WHY I AM SUDDENLY GETTING THIS LECTURE ON ROKUROKUBI?


RIGHT! DON'T YOU THINK THAT WHAT YOU SAW THAT NIGHT WAS ..
WHEN I IMAGINED I SAW SOMETHING STREAKING THROUGH THE SKY?

!?
A ROKU-ROKUBI!?

UH!
THAT'S WHAT YOU SAW, ISN'T IT?
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, BUT...
THERE'S NO WAY TO BE CERTAIN...


EVEN IF A PERSON SEES SOMETHING QUITE CLEARLY, IF IT IS OUTLANDISH ENOUGH, THE BRAIN WON'T RECOGNIZE IT.
FOR EXAMPLE, THINGS LIKE UFO'S ARE LIKE THAT. EVEN IF SOMEONE TRULY SEES IT, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO RECOGNIZE IT ARE FEW.

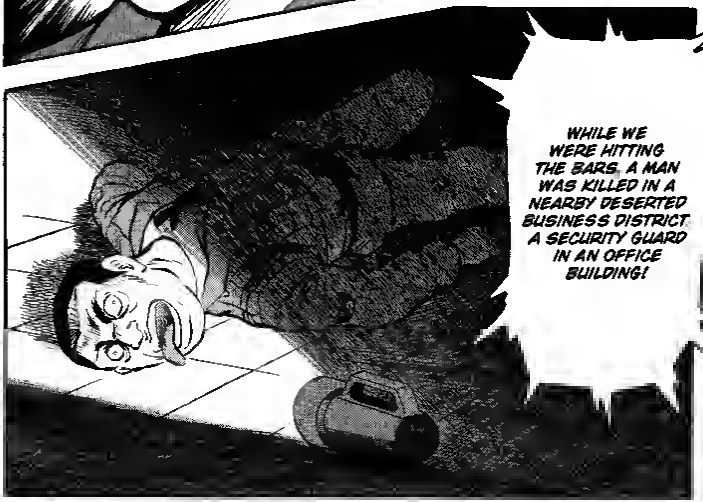

THUS, EVEN THOUGH THEIR EYES ACTUALLY SAW IT, THEY THEMSELVES DID NOT.
BUT ONCE SOMEONE ACTUALLY SEES IT ONCE, THEY SOON REALIZE THAT THINGS LIKE UFO'S REPEATEDLY FLY OVER-HEAD.

YOU REALLY THINK UFOS ARE FLYING AROUND?
HEY, HEY!
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT AS A DESCENDANT OF THE TENGU?
ANYWAY, RIGHT NOW WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE ROKUROKUBI YOU SAW.

THERE WAS AN INCIDENT!
BUT WHY? IF WHAT I SAW WAS A ROKU-ROKUBI...

SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT EVEN THOUGH MY EYES SAW THE MONSTER MY BRAIN REJECTED IT?

A MUR-DER!


WHILE WE WERE HITTING THE BARS, A MAN WAS KILLED IN A NEARBY DESERTED BUSINESS DISTRICT. A SECURITY GUARD IN AN OFFICE BUILDING!

HE WAS STRANGLED AND HIS CERVICAL VERTEBRAE—THAT IS, HIS NECK BONE—WAS COMPLETELY SMASHED.
APPARENTLY SOMETHING QUITE THICK WAS USED TO STRANGLE HIM.....
SOME-THING LIKE A LARGE SNAKE.
THERE WAS A VIDEO...
YOU THINK IT WAS A ROKUROKUBI BASED ON THAT...?
NO!
IN THE SECURITY STATION A VIDEO CAPTURED A VERY STRANGE IMAGE.
FOR ONE INSTANT, THE BLURRY IMAGE OF LONG-NECKED HEAD THAT HARDLY SEEMED HUMAN

IZUMO. GOOD TIMING.
YOU TWO LOOK GLUM
HEY, WHAT'S UP!?
INUI MAY HAVE WITNESSED SOMETHING ABOUT A CASE. PLEASE...!
YOU MEAN WHEN YOU TWO SAW ME WITH THOSE BLOND BABES?
HUH?
CAN YOU BRING INUI BACK TO TWO NIGHTS AGO AROUND 12?
OKAY, I GUESS SO.
KURAMA REALLY WORKED ME OVER FOR THAT.
?

HUH!?
!
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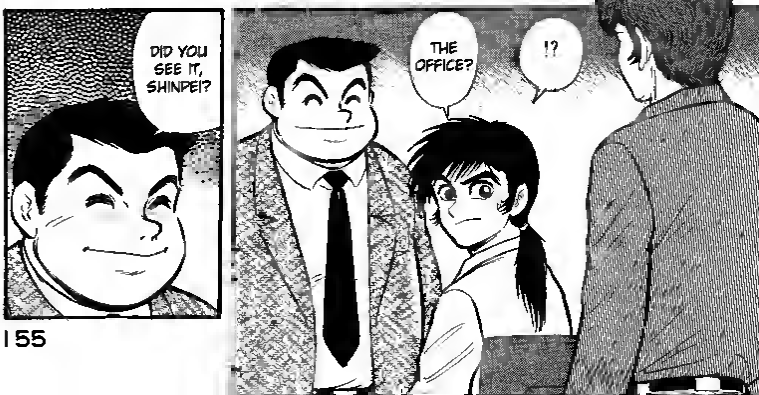
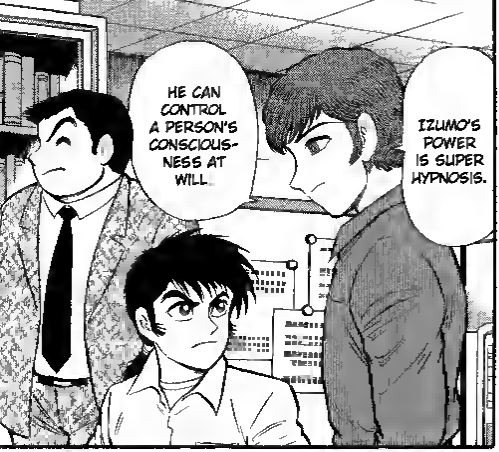
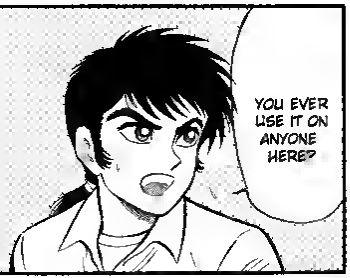
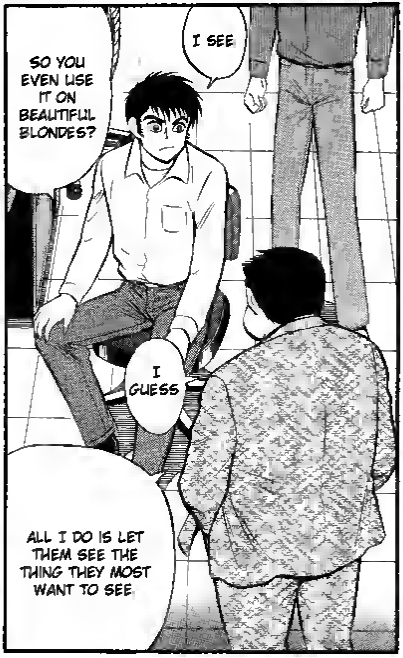
HUH?
WHA!?


DID YOU SEE IT, SHINPEI?
THE OFFICE?
!?


HE CAN CONTROL A PERSON'S CONSCIOUSNESS AT WILL.
IZUMO'S POWER IS SUPER HYPNOSIS.

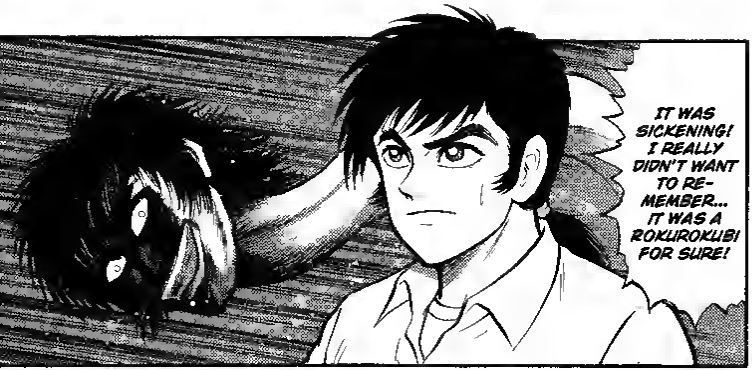
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
AH... UM...

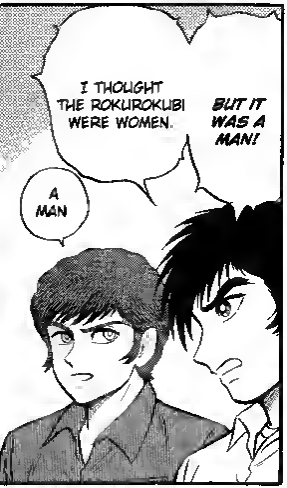

YOU EVER USE IT ON ANYONE HERE?


I SEE
SO YOU EVEN USE IT ON BEAUTIFUL BLONDES?
I GUESS
ALL I DO IS LET THEM SEE THE THING THEY MOST WANT TO SEE.

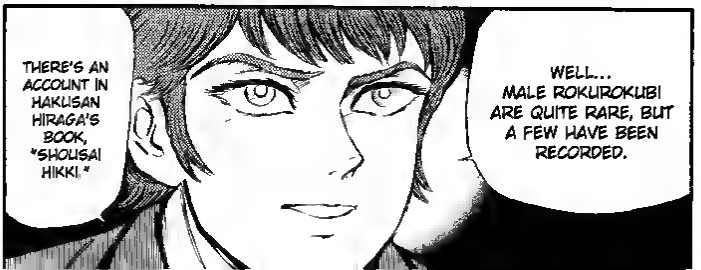
I TRIED IT ONCE ON AOI KATSURAGI.
SHE SLAPPED ME AT ONCE, AND I HAVEN'T TRIED IT SINCE. TENGU ARE SCARY!

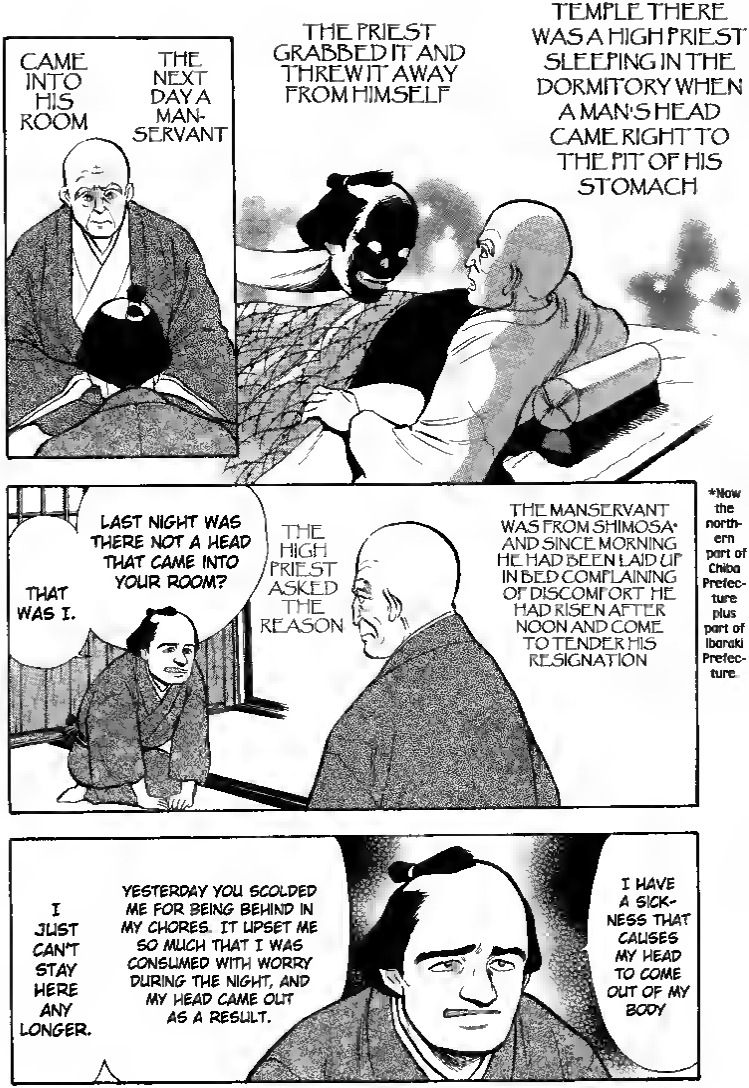
I JUST HAD HIM REWAKEN YOUR MEMORIES.
HEY, HEY!
I ONLY DID AS HAGURO ASKED!
SO WHAT WAS THE STRANGE THING YOU JUST SHOWED ME!?
WHAT DID YOUR EYES SEE THAT YOUR BRAIN REJECTED?
WHAT DID YOU SEE?
AH
OKAY, WHAT WAS IT?
...THAT IS, YOU SAW IT BUT YOUR BRAIN REJECTED IT. I HAD IZUMO REVIVE THAT MEMORY.
A SEVERED HEAD!
A HEAD WITH A LONG NECK LIKE A SNAKE TWISTING AROUND.
A SEVERED HEAD FLOATING THROUGH THE AIR!


IT WAS SICKENING! I REALLY DIDN'T WANT TO RE-MEMBER... IT WAS A ROKUROKUBI FOR SURE!


I THOUGHT THE ROKUROKUBI WERE WOMEN.
BUT IT WAS A MAN!
A MAN

BUT IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE SOMETHING FROM THE SPIRIT WORLD LIKE A MAGATSUHI!
IT SEEMED LIKE IT HAD A PHYSICAL BODY LIKE A LIVING PERSON!


THERE'S AN ACCOUNT IN HAKUSAN HIRAGA'S BOOK, "SHOUSAI HIKKI."
WELL... MALE ROKUROKUBI ARE QUITE RARE, BUT A FEW HAVE BEEN RECORDED.

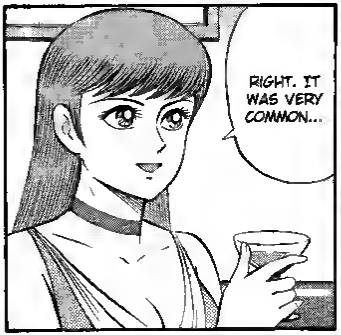

ONCE IN ZOJO TEMPLE THERE WAS A HIGH PRIEST SLEEPING IN THE DORMITORY WHEN A MAN'S HEAD CAME RIGHT TO THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH
THE PRIEST GRABBED IT AND THREW IT AWAY FROM HIMSELF
THE NEXT DAY A MAN-SERVANT CAME INTO HIS ROOM
THE MANSERVANT WAS FROM SHIMOSA* AND SINCE MORNING HE HAD BEEN LAID UP IN BED COMPLAINING OF DISCOMFORT. HE HAD RISEN AFTER NOON AND CAME TO TENDER HIS RESIGNATION
THE HIGH PRIEST ASKED THE REASON
LAST NIGHT WAS THERE NOT A HEAD THAT CAME INTO YOUR ROOM?
THAT WAS I.
I HAVE A SICKNESS THAT CAUSES MY HEAD TO COME OUT OF MY BODY
YESTERDAY YOU SCOLDED ME FOR BEING BEHIND IN MY CHORES. IT UPSET ME SO MUCH THAT I WAS CONSUMED WITH WORRY DURING THE NIGHT, AND MY HEAD CAME OUT AS A RESULT.
I JUST CAN'T STAY HERE ANY LONGER.

*Now the northern part of Chiba Prefecture plus part of Ibaraki Prefecture.

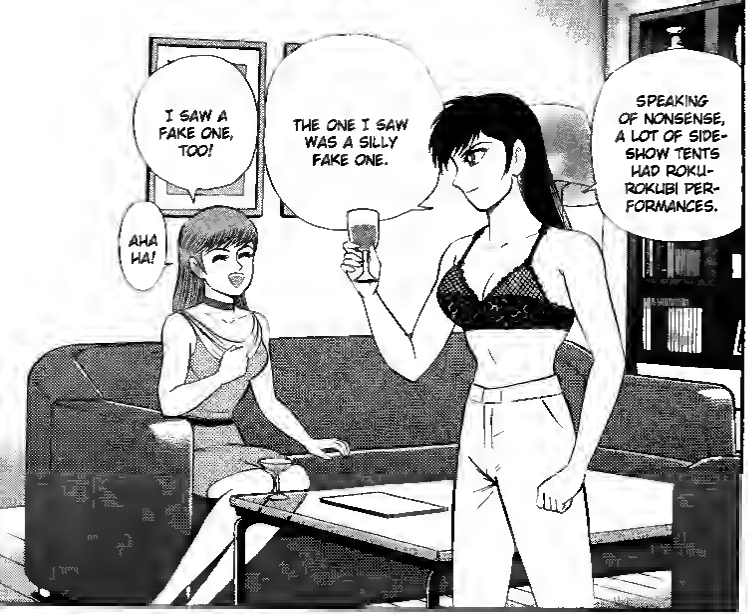
DIS-EASE?
HE SAYS THAT THIS DISEASE WAS QUITE COMMON IN SHIMOSA PROVICE.
THE AUTHOR WRITES THAT HE HEARD THIS STORY DIRECTLY FROM THE HIGH PRIEST.
THE BRAIN WOULD DIE IN AN INSTANT!
IF THE HEAD IS SEPARATED FROM THE BODY, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BLOOD FLOW?
COULD SUCH A DISEASE ACTUALLY EXIST?
AND IF SOMEHOW THAT LONG NECK IN-CLUDED THE HEART, THEN THE TORSO WOULD DIE.
NO WAY COULD IT RETURN AND REATTACH ITSELF.
OF COURSE NOT!
IT'S BIOLOGICALLY IMPOSSIBLE!

THERE WERE A LOT OF STORIES LIKE THAT DURING THE EDO PERIOD, WEREN'T THERE?

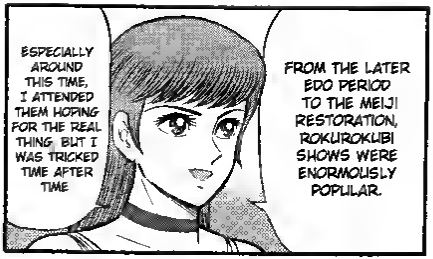
ROKU-ROKUBI... HUH?


RIGHT. IT WAS VERY COMMON...

MOST OF IT WAS A BUNCH OF NON-SENSE.
AND LOTS OF STORIES TELL OF GIRLS FALSELY ACCUSED AS ROKUROKUBI WHO COULDN'T EVER GET MARRIED AFTER...

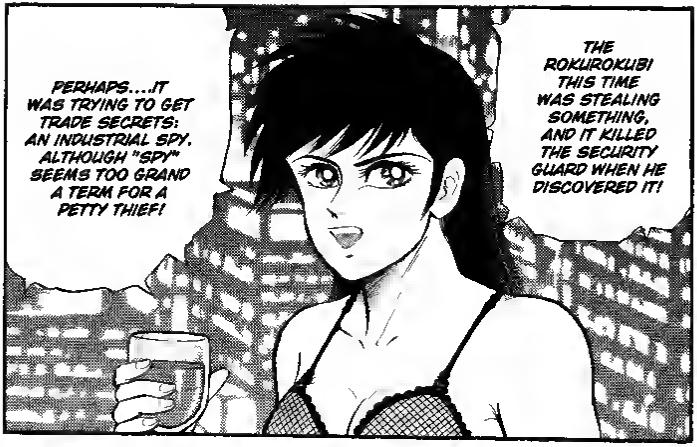

I SAW A FAKE ONE, TOO!
THE ONE I SAW WAS A SILLY FAKE ONE.
SPEAKING OF NONSENSE, A LOT OF SIDE-SHOW TENTS HAD ROKU-ROKUBI PER-FORMANCES.
AHA HA!

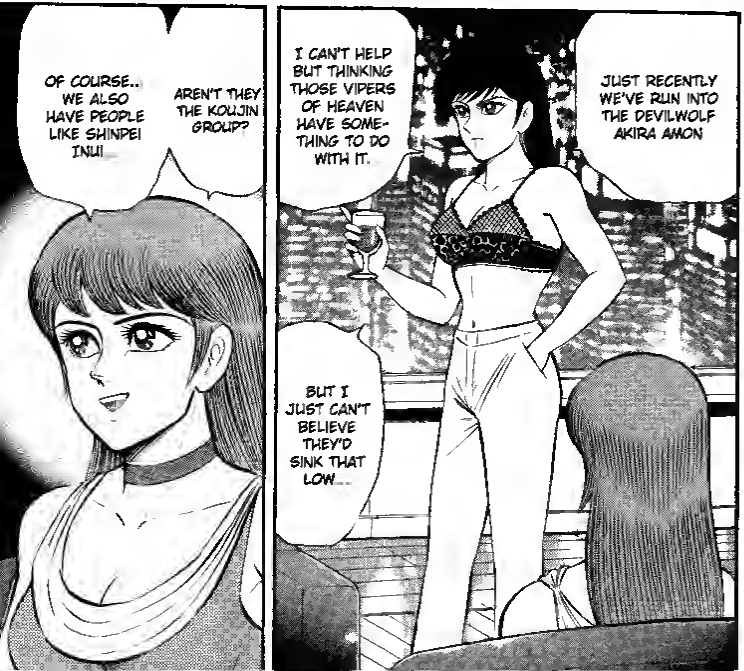
IT WAS SHORTLY BEFORE I MET YOU, AOI!
RIGHT! EVERYBODY, INCLUDING ME, WAS HEADING TO THE HUT TO SEE IF THE RUMOR WAS TRUE!


ESPECIALLY AROUND THIS TIME, I ATTENDED THEM HOPING FOR THE REAL THING, BUT I WAS TRICKED TIME AFTER TIME
FROM THE LATER EDO PERIOD TO THE MEIJI RESTORATION, ROKUROKUBI SHOWS WERE ENORMOUSLY POPULAR.

THE ONE RECOUNTED IN "SHOHO KENBUN-RAKU." DO YOU THINK IT WAS REAL?
STILL, AT THE SEVENTH YEAR OF THE UENO NO YAMABUNKA FESTIVAL THERE WAS A ROKUROKUBI SHOW—

* Now Nara Prefecture
I WAS REALLY SURPRISED AND FASCINATED
OF COURSE, HIS HEAD DID NOT COME OUT!
Apparently he had been born with a long neck.
The rokurokubi was a 50-ish man from Yamato*....
!
BUT IT'D BE RATHER FUN IF THE HEAD ACTUALLY DID COME OUT.
RIGHT! A TRUE SPIRIT MONSTER!
AND VERY UNUSUAL AS WELL.


THE ROKUROKUBI THIS TIME WAS STEALING SOMETHING, AND IT KILLED THE SECURITY GUARD WHEN HE DISCOVERED IT!
PERHAPS....IT WAS TRYING TO GET TRADE SECRETS: AN INDUSTRIAL SPY. ALTHOUGH "SPY" SEEMS TOO GRAND A TERM FOR A PETTY THIEF!


JUST RECENTLY WE'VE RUN INTO THE DEVILWOLF AKIRA AMON
I CAN'T HELP BUT THINKING THOSE VIPERS OF HEAVEN HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT.
BUT I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'D SINK THAT LOW...
AREN'T THEY THE KOUJIN GROUP?
OF COURSE.. WE ALSO HAVE PEOPLE LIKE SHINPEI INUI

THERE'S A TERRYIFYING MONSTER ON THE LOOSE IN THIS ENORMOUS CITY!

IF SO, IT'S A PAIN. THE VIPERS HAVE THE SAME LEVEL OF POWERS AS WE DO, AND IF SOMEONE'S OUT THERE WITH POWERS LIKE THAT... NOT TRULY UNDERSTANDING THEIR NATURE...
IT'S CERTAINLY POSSIBLE
YOU MEAN, DESCENDANTS WHO BECAME SEPARATED AND THEN REDISCOVERED THEIR ANCESTRY!?

closed
HEEEY
SORRY TO KEEP YA WAITIN', PROFESSOR TAKEMOTO
DID EVERYTHING GO WELL, ARIMURA?
APPARENTLY, THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT.
NO BIG DEAL.

I SEE. IN THAT CASE, FINE.
ANY-WAY, I GOT THE DATA.
YOU GOTTA EXPECT SMALL STUFF LIKE THAT.
ALRIGHT
GO ON. SHOW ME.
YOU CAN COUNT IT LATER
RIGHT HERE
FIVE MILLION YEN IN CASH, RIGHT?
YOU GOT THE MONEY, RIGHT?

HERE
YA THINK I SCREWED UP?
FIRST I NEED TO BE SURE IT IS THE RIGHT DATA
YOU'VE DONE WELL.
EVERY-THING LOOKS FINE
カチ カチ
I KEEP TELLIN' YA!
THERE'S NOWHERE I CAN'T GET INTO...
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT IN, BUT YOU DID IT!
ﾊﾟﾝ ﾊﾟﾝ

NOW IT'S MY TURN I'LL JUST HAVE A LOOK AT THIS...
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO STEAL THE DATA WITHOUT BEING NOTICED
MURDER IS A PROBLEM, ARIMURA.
BUYER'S REMORSE?
WHAT'S THIS MEAN?
IT GOES AGAINST OUR BUSINESS ETHICS.
AFTER GOING TO ALL THIS TROUBLE TO GET THE DATA, WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CREATE A PRODUCT WITH IT.
A PRODUCT MIGHT JUST PROVE WE WERE THE ONES THAT STOLE THE DATA. IN ANY CASE, THIS INCIDENT DRIVES DOWN THE PRICE WE CAN ASK.
AND FURTHER-MORE.

CAN WE PRETEND THIS JOB DIDN'T HAPPEN?
I'VE WORKED WITH YOU COUNTLESS TIMES. I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU.
AFTER I FINALLY FOUND YOU.
IT'S NOW A CRIMINAL CASE: A MURDER CASE AT THAT. THE POLICE WILL TAKE IT VERY SERIOUSLY.
ALL ABOUT YOU...
DON'T BE A FOOL. IF THE COPS PICK ME UP... I'LL SING LIKE A CANARY!
PRETEND A JOB WITH A KILLING INVOLVED DIDN'T HAPPEN? THAT'S A BAD JOKE...
BECAUSE I'M...
OH, NO... YOU CAN'T KILL ME...
THAT'S WHAT I THINK TOO. SO I DON'T HAVE ANY CHOICE BUT TO KILL YOU, DO I?

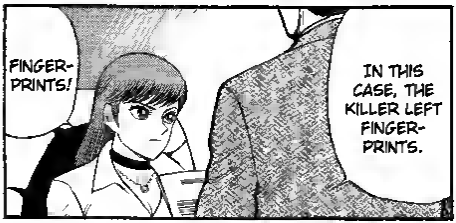
A MONSTER!
!?

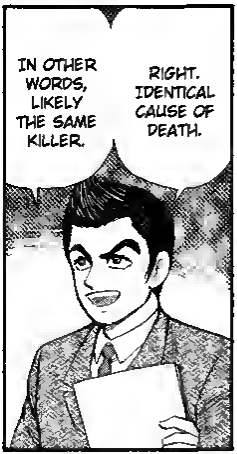
ガーン
グイッ
KILLING YOUR OWN MEN IS A STUPID MISTAKE! WON'T THEY BE AFTER YOU, TOO!?
HEY!
MIKAMI!

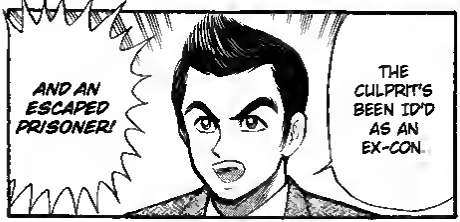
I HAVE TO KILL THIS FIEND!
WAHAHA! I'M FAR SUPERIOR TO ANY MERE HUMAN!

IT GUESS IT'S BEEN A POPULAR KIND OF MONSTER FOR A LONG TIME AND SO MANY EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS
HUH THERE SURE ARE A LOT OF STORIES ABOUT ROKUROKUBI
*western part of Fukui Province
THE MID-LATE EDO PERIOD WRITER MATSUURA SEIZAN INCLUDED A STORY ABOUT A MAID WHO WAS A ROKUROKUBI IN HIS BOOK, "KATSUSHI YAWA"
IN "TAIHEI MONOGATARI" THERE IS A STORY OF A YOUNG CHAMBERMAID FROM WAKASA PROVINCE* WHO WAS A ROKUROKUBI
RIGHT...
THEY MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING!
I JUST SAW MR. AKIBA RUNNING INTO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE!
IN "KANDEN KOUHITSU" THE AUTHOR KOUKEI BAN CLAIMS TO HAVE ACTUALLY SEEN A ROKUROKUBI WHO WAS A PROSTITUTE IN THE YOSHIWARA RED LIGHT DISTRICT OF EDO
TACHIBANA NANKAI, ACTIVE IN KYOTO IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY, WROTE IN HIS ESSAY CALLED "HOKUSOU SADAN" ABOUT A MAID WHO WAS A ROKUROKUBI

ABOUT THAT TAKEMOTO WHO WAS KILLED. YOU KNOW, THE ONE WHO MADE TROUBLE AT STOCKHOLDER MEETINGS...
SAME M.O. AS THE SECURITY GUARD...
YOU MEAN, THE NECK WAS STRETCHED AND THE NECK BONE SHATTERED?


IN THIS CASE, THE KILLER LEFT FINGER-PRINTS.
FINGER-PRINTS!


RIGHT. IDENTICAL CAUSE OF DEATH.
IN OTHER WORDS, LIKELY THE SAME KILLER.

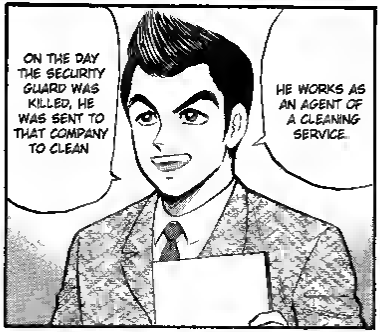

THE CULPRIT'S BEEN ID'D AS AN EX-CON.
AND AN ESCAPED PRISONER!

HE WAS SENTENCED TO TEN YEARS' HARD LABOR AND HE ESCAPED MIDWAY THROUGH!
HIS NAME IS TETSUJI ARIMURA
AN ESC-APEE ?
IT HAPPENED ABOUT A YEAR AGO, AND THE ESCAPE HAPPENED UNDER RATHER MYSTERIOUS CIR-CUMSTANCES. HE OPENED SEVERAL LOCKED DOORS IN THE PRISON, BY BRA-ZENLY EMERGING AND KILLING THE WARDEN WHO MANAGED THE KEYS.
THE WARDEN WAS STRANGLED IN A SIMILAR MANNER TO THE CASES THIS TIME

IF THIS ARIMURA IS A ROKUROKUBI...
HE COULD HAVE KILLED THE WARDEN, TAKEN THE KEYS AND OPENED THE DOORS FROM THE OUTSIDE.
HIS BUNKMATE WAS SLEEPING, AND NONE OF THE PRISONERS NOTICED THAT ARIMURA HAD LEFT.
THE PRISON DOORS WERE ALL LOCKED FROM THE OUTSIDE, SO IT'S A MYSTERY HOW ARIMURA COULD HAVE UNLOCKED THEM.
AFTER THAT, ARIMURA'S WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN.
THERE'S ONE MORE CRITICAL PIECE OF INFORMATION.
MORE GHOST-BUSTING.
LOOKS LIKE...
SO IT APPEARS...

I SEE. THAT DOES LOOK SUSPICIOUS. WHERE IS HIS BUNKMATE NOW?
THIS IS JUST MY OWN CONJECTURE, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THE TROUBLE STARTED ABOUT THE TIME HE GOT OUT.
ABOUT 4 MONTHS BACK ARIMURA'S BUNKMATE COMPLETED HIS SENTENCE AND WAS RELEASED

OH, LIH...
INUI! YOU BUSY?
NOPE, I'M FREE.


ON THE DAY THE SECURITY GUARD WAS KILLED, HE WAS SENT TO THAT COMPANY TO CLEAN
HE WORKS AS AN AGENT OF A CLEANING SERVICE.

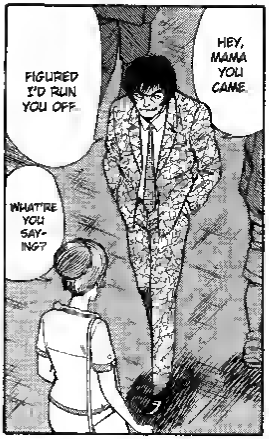
SOUNDS LIKE OUR MAN! WHAT'S HIS ADDRESS?

ARE YOU AN IDIOT!? WE ARE DETECTIVES!
HUH?! A STAKE-OUT!? LIKE A POLICE DETEC-TIVE!?

I WANT YOU TO OBSERVE THIS MAN FOR A FEW DAYS.
YOU KNOW HOW TO DO A STAKE-OUT?

JUST KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. THAT'S ALL!
WELL, I KINDA ALREADY KNEW IT!
REALLY?
I SEE...
WE ARE SPECIAL DETECTIVES WHO INVESTIGATE SPIRIT MONSTERS. THAT'S OUR JOB HERE AT HEAVEN, INC.!
UGH! YOU'RE SO DENSE!

NO NEED FOR CONTACTS WE JUST NEED YOUR EYES!
ANYTHING YOU SEE WE'LL PICK UP WITH TELEPATHY.
WHO DO I CON-TACT?
I'VE SEEN LOTS OF POLICE DETECTIVE SHOWS I KNOW WHAT TO DO!
HUH !?


HEY, MAMA YOU CAME.
FIGURED I'D RUN YOU OFF.
WHAT'RE YOU SAY-ING?

SURE. WHAT'S WRONG? ANYWAY, THESE DAYS WHEN YOU GO TO A SHOP THERE'S ALWAYS A BIG FUSS.
SO IS THE MONEY ALL YOU'RE AFTER?

DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU HATED DARK GUYS LIKE ME?
YOU THINK I'D TURN DOWN AN INVITE FROM MY SWEET AR!?

BLEH
THAT'S OLD NEWS! THESE DAYS YOU'RE THE BEST! YOU'RE ROLLIN' IN THE DOUGH!

BUT...
DON'T ASK ME...
TETSUJI ARIMURA, HUH..... AND HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A ROKUROKUBI?
HE'S BEEN RIGHT ABOUT EVERYTHING HE'S SAID SO FAR, RIGHT?
IF IT CAME FROM MR. AKIBA IT CAN'T BE WRONG, CAN IT?
HE DOESN'T NEED ANY INSTRUMENTS. JUST TELEPATHY.
HE'S LIKE A HUMAN RADAR. HE CAN CATCH THE INFORMATION ON THE AIRWAVES.
WELL, THAT IS TRUE.
HE'S AMAZING AT PIECING TOGETHER INFORMATION OFF THE INTERNET

THERE'S BEEN NO SIGN OF WHASISNAME KOGA, ARIMURA'S BUNKMATE
ANYWAY, THIS PLACE SURE IS QUIET SINCE NOON THE CURTAINS HAVE BEEN SHUT TIGHT
HEY, HEY. JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO YOU WERE SAYING, "SURVEILLANCE IS ALL ABOUT PATIENCE " SINGING A DIFFERENT TUNE NOW?
MAYBE HE WENT BACK TO HIS HOMETOWN?
THE CLEANING SERVICE SAID HE'D TAKEN SOME TIME OFF...
IT'S SO BORING ALONE!
DANG!
I'M GOING HOME I JUST CAME TO CHECK OUT YOUR DIGS I DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH WILL HAPPEN TONIGHT
WELL, ANYWAY
YOU NEED TO PROVE YOURSELF, NEWBIE! KEEP A SHARP EYE OUT!

KURAMA'S COMING SOON WITH A BENTO BOX SHE'S MAKING FOR SUPPER I'M SURE SHE PLANS TO CHEER YOU ON
I THOUGHT I'D TOLD YOU...
HUH?
KURAMA'S MAKING A BENTO ? UNDER-STOOD!
IN THAT CASE, THANKS FOR CHECKING! SEE YOU LATER!
HUH? SO THAT'S HOW IT IS!
HMMM THAT GIRL IS COMING AROUND AGAIN...
THAT'S THE THIRD TIME
?
HER?
THE PUNK GIRL..
TH-THAT'S!

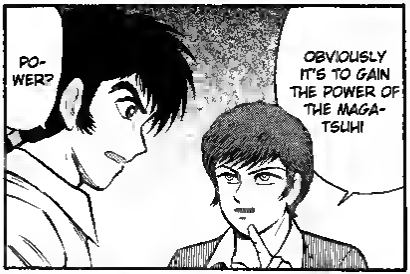
MACHI ABISU! SHE'S A MEMBER OF THE KOUJIN GROUP, THE COLLECTIVE OF THE VIPERS OF HEAVEN!
THE KOUJIN GROUP? "KOUJIN," MEANING RAINBOW GODS? WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH VIPERS?

PEOPLE IN THE OLD DAYS THOUGHT THAT A BROAD RAINBOW CROSSING THE FULL SKY WAS A MANIFESTATION OF THE SNAKES WHO LIVE IN HEAVEN.
IN OTHER WORDS, SNAKE GODS. THEY CONSIDER THEMSELVES SUPERIOR TO HUMANITY.
THE KOUJIN GROUP PRETENDS TO BE A RELIGIOUS GROUP BUT DOESN'T REALLY FOLLOW IT!

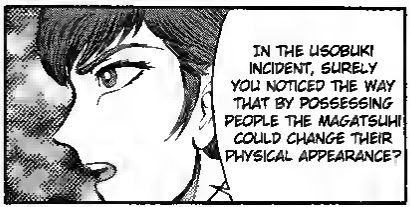
MS. KATSURAGI CALLED THEM OUR ENEMIES
IT IS CERTAIN, HOWEVER, THAT THERE ARE MANY MORE THAN WE OF THE CELESTIAL FOX
THERE'S A SMALL OFFICE, BUT THE INNER CIRCLE IS NEVER SEEN THERE. THE FULL NUMBER OF THEM IS UNKNOWN
IT IS SAID WE'RE BOTH DESCENDED FROM THE SAME RACE OF SPACE ALIENS BUT THEY ARE QUITE DIFFERENT THAN US
I'M NOT REALLY CERTAIN MYSELF BUT LONG AGO THERE WERE SUPPOSEDLY SOME FIERCE BATTLES BETWEEN US
HUH!?
THEY'RE MORE LIKE SPIRIT MONSTERS THAN HUMANS!
NOT ALL OF THEM ARE LIKE THAT, BUT RECENTLY MORE AND MORE HAVE BEEN APPEARING THAT ARE LIKE AKIRA AMON.
THEY'VE MELDED THE MAGATSUHI WITH THEIR OWN SPIRITS!

THE VIPERS COMBINE THEM WITH THEIR OWN ASTRAL BODIES!
THEIR SPIRITS BECOME AS ONE !!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "MELDED WITH THE MAGATSUHI?"
THE MAGATSUHI ARE EVIL SPRITS FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL.
SO IT'S KINDA LIKE WHEN THOSE USOBUKI POSSESSED THE PEOPLE IN THAT VILLAGE!? OR IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

IN ESSENCE, THE MAGATSUHI BECOME PART OF THEIR SPIRITS!
THEY ARE THE VIPERS OF HEAVEN! THEY PLACE THE MAGATSUHI COMPLETELY UNDER THEIR CONTROL!
IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT! THE VIPERS ARE STRONG AND THEY CAN SUBDUE THE MAGATSUHI!!

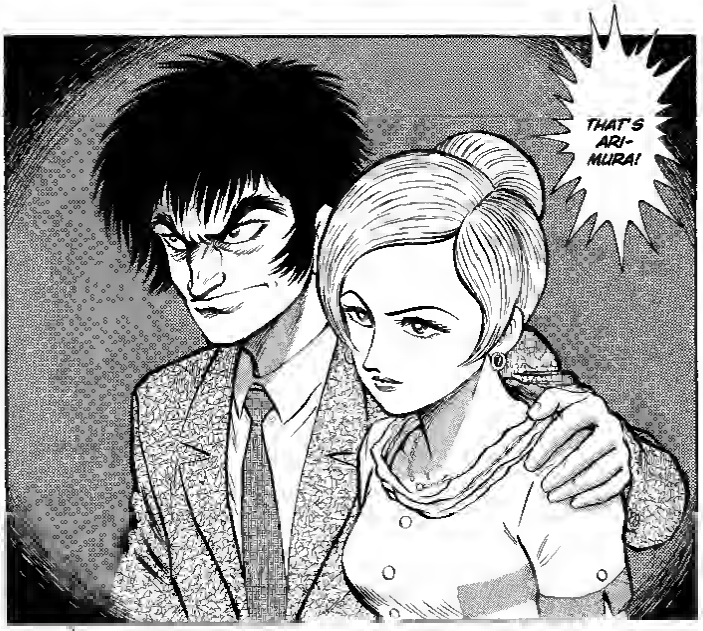

PO-WER?
OBVIOUSLY IT'S TO GAIN THE POWER OF THE MAGA-TSUHI

MERGING WITH THE SPIRITS OF WICKED MONSTERS!?
B..BUT WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO GAIN BY DOING THAT!?


IN THE USOBUKI INCIDENT, SURELY YOU NOTICED THE WAY THAT BY POSSESSING PEOPLE THE MAGATSUHI COULD CHANGE THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE?

WHEN THE MAGATSUHI ENTERED THE TREE IT WAS ABLE TO CHANGE THE TREE BY FORMING A KNOT THAT LOOKED SORT OF LIKE A HEAD
THE SPIRIT CAN ACTUALLY CAUSE LIVING CELLS TO CHANGE!
IT IS POSSIBLE TO USE THAT CELL-CHANGING POWER TO TRANSFORM: TO SHAPE-SHIFT INTO A DIFFERENT FORM!
THE VIPERS OF HEAVEN! THERE ARE QUITE A NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE KOUJIN GROUP THAT POSSESS THE POWER TO SHAPESHIFT!
THAT GUY AKIRA AMON IS A WEREWOLF! I'VE HEARD HE CAN TRANSFORM INTO A WOLF
I HAVEN'T SEEN IT FOR MYSELF, BUT IT'S WHAT PRESIDENT AMARU AND MISS KATSURAGI SAY.

WERE-WOLF!?
SUCH A THING EXISTS!?
HE APPEARED BEFORE MS. KATSURAGI AS A LIVING GHOST, BUT YOU MEAN HE CAN ACTUALLY CHANGE PHYSICALLY?
IF THAT'S THE CASE, THIS GIRL CAN, TOO?
THERE'S A RUMOR AT HEAVEN, INC THAT MACHI ABISU MAY BE A ROKUROKUBI
SHE LIKELY HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS CASE.
.....
HUH!?
THERE'S A CAR STOPPING IN FRONT OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING
ドロ
ハタ


THAT'S ARI-MURA!

IT LOOKS LIKE...
WE'LL BE SEEING A ROKU-ROKUBI SHOW!

HMM
HE WAS FRIENDS WITH THE CLEANING MAN ALRIGHT!
THERE'S NO MIS-TAKE!

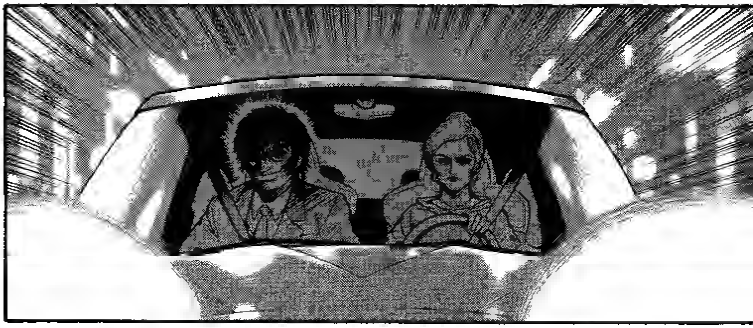
HUH!?
IT'S A REAL TIDY PLACE WHA..?
THERE'S NOT REALLY ANY FURNITURE HERE
LOANED IT ALL TO FRIENDS
KYA!? WHAT'S THAT!?
Y-YOU DIDN'T!?
IT'S NOTHING. JUST A CORPSE.
I KILLED HIM...WE HAD JOINED UP, BUT HE WAS STARTIN' TO GET NERVOUS AND IT GOT TO BE A PAIN.
A... ARI!?
YOU KILLED HIM!?

I NEED TO USE YOUR CAR TO DISPOSE OF THE BODY THAT'S WHY I CALLED.
WILL YOU HELP? WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR SO LONG...
S-SOME-THING LIKE THAT...
I...I NEVER...
I DON'T RECOMMEND A REFUSAL!
A REFUSAL WOULD BE TERRIFYING!
LOOK!
キャアアー!!

DON'T BE SO SICKENED, HEHEHEHE!
KU
KYAAAAAH!
A MAN WHOSE HEAD COMES OUT LIKE THIS CAN BE FUN!
MORE THAN A MAN WITH A REGULAR HEAD!

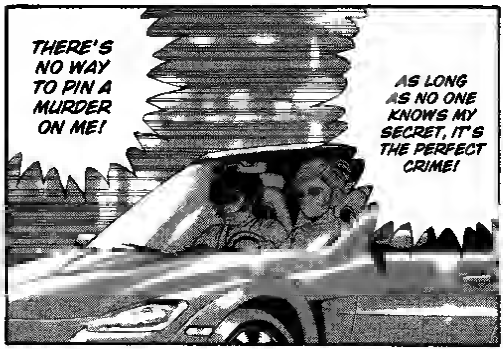
ARIMURA IS COMING OUT! HE'S GOT SOMETHING ON HIS SHOULDER!?
IT'S A SLEEPING BAG! IT LOOKS HEAVY! COULD THERE BE SOMEONE INSIDE IT?
THAT GIRL WHO LOOKS LIKE SHE'S FROM A MAMA CLUB SEEMS FRIGHTENED COULD IT BE A BODY IN THE SLEEPING BAG?
IT SEEMS LIKE SHE'S BEING FORCED INTO CARRYING IT IN HER CAR.
THAT'S PROBABLY IT.
THEY'RE GOING!
RIGHT! LET'S FOLLOW THEM!

I PARKED DOWN THIS ALLEY!
STUPID PLACE TO PARK!
DAMN! THEY'RE GETTING AWAY!
!
WAS THAT THE SAME GIRL ON THE BIKE!?
YEAH!
MACHI ABISU IS FOLLOWING THAT GUY TOO!



BUT IT'S REALLY JUST A SPECIAL POWER.

IT'S TRUE IN THE OLD DAYS THEY'DVE CALLED ME A SPIRIT MONSTER
HEH HEH HEH THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF.


THERE'S NO WAY TO PIN A MURDER ON ME!
AS LONG AS NO ONE KNOWS MY SECRET, IT'S THE PERFECT CRIME!

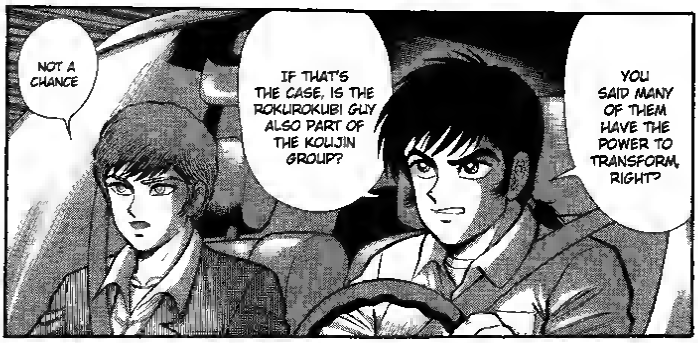
IN OTHER WORDS
I BECAME A SUPER-MAN!

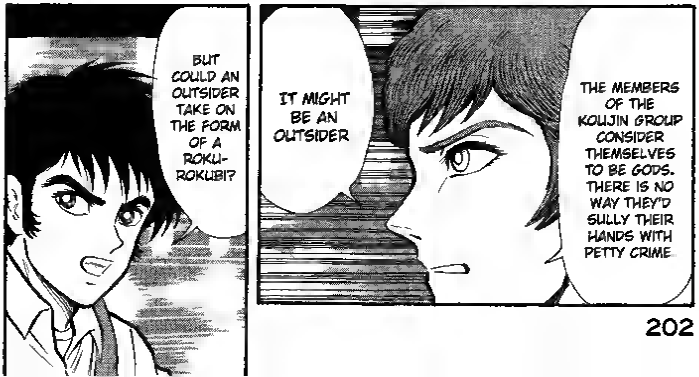
IF YOU HOOK UP WITH ME, NOTHING BAD WILL HAPPEN!
I'LL MAKE YA FILTHY RICH!
EVEN BESIDES MY STRETCHY HEAD, I'M A GOOD HEALTHY CATCH!

CAN I ASK YOU A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THIS KOUJIN GROUP OF THE VIPERS OF HEAVEN?
YOU SAID IT WAS OLD, RIGHT?
OLDER THAN THE HOUNDS OF HEAVEN.
VERY OLD! IN ANCIENT TIMES SERPENTS WERE EVERYWHERE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD!
SOME PEOPLE CALLED THEM GODS, OTHERS CALLED THEM DEMONS!
FOR EXAMPLE, A DRAGON'S BASICALLY A KIND OF SERPENT!
AND A SERPENT TRICKED EVE INTO EATING EDEN'S FORBIDDEN FRUIT!
IN JAPAN THEY ARE ENSHRINED IN SOME PLACES. IN OTHER PLACES THEY ARE CONSIDERED TO BE DEMONS LIKE YAMATO NO OROCHI AND EXTERMINATED.
YOU THINK THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH REAL SNAKES?
EVEN THOUGH ANCIENT PEOPLES WERE IGNORANT, IT'S NOT LIKE THEY THOUGHT A NORMAL SNAKE WAS A GOD.

IF PEOPLE BELIEVED THE STORY WAS TRUE, THEN OBVIOUSLY IT WAS NOT A NORMAL SNAKE
CAN A SNAKE AND A PERSON CONCEIVE A CHILD?
ACTUALLY THERE ARE MANY OLD LEGENDS OF "SERPENT MARRIAGES." AT MOUNT MIWA IN NARA THERE IS A STORY OF A SHRINE MAIDEN NAMED "IKUTORI YORI-HIME" WHO BECAME PREGNANT FROM THE NOCTURNAL VISIT OF A SERPENT.
SINCE ANCIENT TIMES IN JAPAN, THERE ARE MANY CUSTOMS VENERATING SNAKES AS GODS.
FOR EXAMPLE, THE SPIRAL SHAPE OF KAGAMI MOCHI WE HAVE AT NEW YEARS IMITATES THE FORM OF A SNAKE...
"KA" AND "KAGA" ARE WORDS FOR "SNAKE" IN OLD JAPANESE, SO COMBINED WITH "MI" (WHICH MEANS "BODY") THE KAGAMI MOCHI GETS ITS NAME.
WOW. I HAD NO IDEA. THAT MEANS NEARLY EVERY JAPANESE PERSON
WORSHIPS A SNAKE EVERY NEW YEARS?
YOU MUST UNDERSTAND NOW WHY AOI SAYS THE VIPERS ARE OLDER THAN THE HOUNDS?

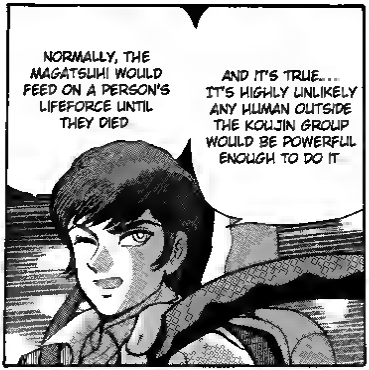
IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SNAKE WORSHIP, CHECK OUT HIROKO YOSHINO'S BOOK "JAPANESE SNAKE RELIGIONS."
UM. I'M MORE INTERESTED IN THE KOUJIN GROUP.


YOU SAID MANY OF THEM HAVE THE POWER TO TRANSFORM, RIGHT?
IF THAT'S THE CASE, IS THE ROKUROKUBI GUY ALSO PART OF THE KOUJIN GROUP?
NOT A CHANCE


THE MEMBERS OF THE KOUJIN GROUP CONSIDER THEMSELVES TO BE GODS. THERE IS NO WAY THEY'D SULLY THEIR HANDS WITH PETTY CRIME.
IT MIGHT BE AN OUTSIDER
BUT COULD AN OUTSIDER TAKE ON THE FORM OF A ROKU-ROKUBI?

THAT'S THE ONLY WAY THE ALTERATION CAN APPEAR IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD AS WELL AS THE SPIRIT WORLD
IT'S TRUE THAT TO BECOME A MONSTER LIKE A KOKUROKUBI YOU HAVE TO MELD YOUR SPIRIT WITH ONE OF THE WICKED MAGATSUHI SPIRITS

!
COULD IT BE SOMEONE LIKE ME, BUT WITH THE ANCESTRY OF A SNAKE INSTEAD OF A HOUND?


NORMALLY, THE MAGATSUHI WOULD FEED ON A PERSON'S LIFEFORCE UNTIL THEY DIED
AND IT'S TRUE... IT'S HIGHLY UNLIKELY ANY HUMAN OUTSIDE THE KOUJIN GROUP WOULD BE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DO IT

COULD THAT BE IT!?
MAKES SENSE.
WE'VE COME INTO THE MOUNTAINS. HE'S PROBABLY GETTING CLOSE TO HIS DESTINATION
UH-HUH LOOKS LIKE
HE'S DECIDED TO PITCH THE BODY IN THE MOUNTAINS

HA HA HA I FIGURED SOMETHING LIKE THIS MIGHT HAPPEN,
I FOOLED THE VERY GUY NOW SLEEPING IN THE SLEEPING BAG INTO DIGGING THIS HOLE FOR ME...
TOLD HIM IT WAS TO HIDE SOME BIG MONEY!
HE DUG LIKE CRAZY, NEVER KNEW HE WAS ONLY DIGGIN' HIS OWN GRAVE!
THAT'S WHY I ASKED YOU TO DUMP THE BODY HERE
HEHE...
THIS WAY, WE'RE IN IT TOGETHER! IT'LL MAKE THINGS SMOOTHER BETWEEN US!

MA....
MACHI
ABISU!

THE CAR'S STOPPED. HEY! WHO'S THAT?
AOI.
MISS KATSURAGI
THIS IS THE CHAIRMAN'S DIRECT ORDER. BEHEAD THE ROKUROKUBI!!
THE CHAIRMAN INFORMED ME THAT THIS IS WHERE WE'D BE FIGHTING THE ROKUROKUBI! SO I CAME AHEAD AND WAITED!

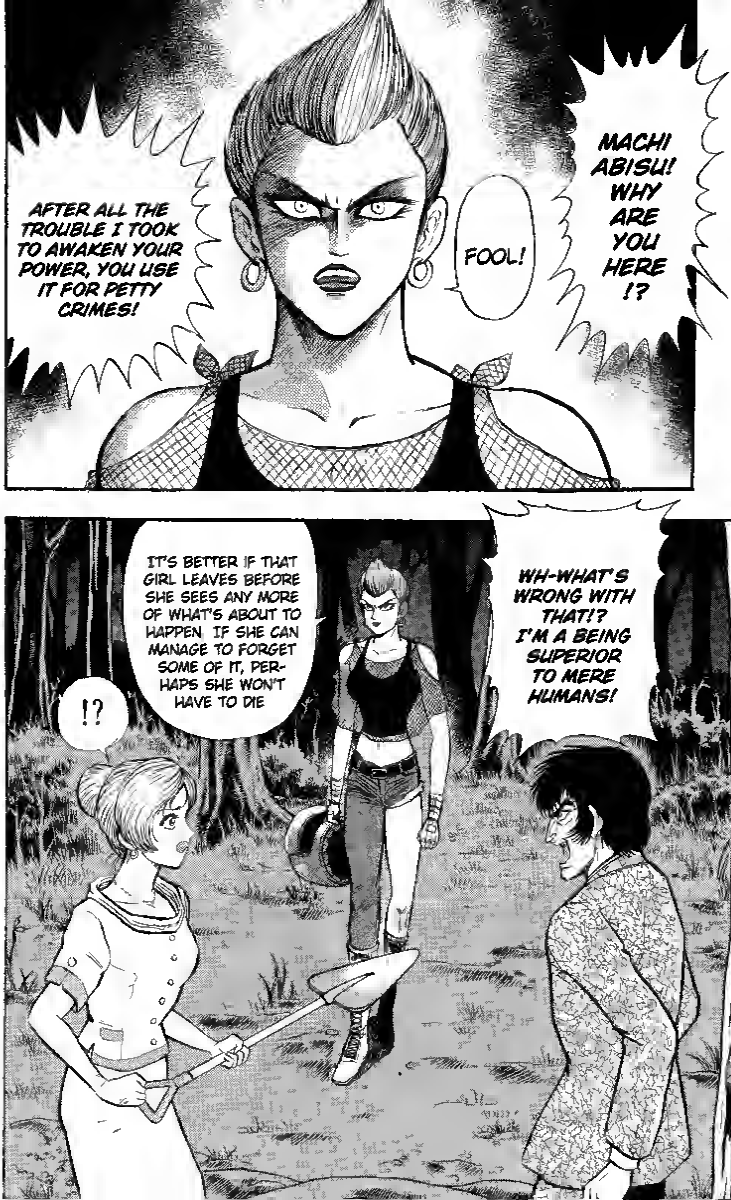
WHY BEHEAD!?
H-HOLD ON A MINUTE!
IT'S THE ONLY WAY...
OH, I SEE... OF COURSE...
YOU'RE A ROOKIE AFTER ALL.
SHINPEI, IF YOU THINK YOU AREN'T UP TO IT YOU CAN WAIT IN THE CAR
WE HAVE TO KILL IT NOW FOR THE SAKE OF ALL.
IT'S JUST A SPIRIT MONSTER NOW, BEYOND DOUBT!
THIS CUTTHROAT ROKUROKUBI IS NO LONGER HUMAN!!
REA... REALLY?
BUT GET THIS!

WE ARE HEAVEN'S HOUNDS! THIS IS OUR JOB !!

!

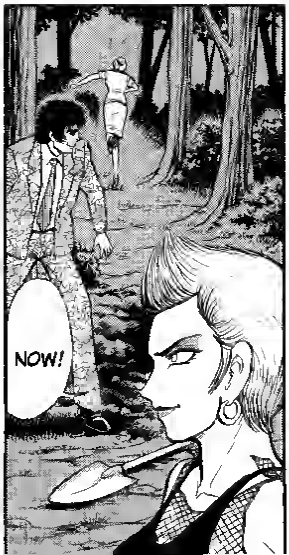
IT'S TRUE OUR OPPONENT IS A MURDERER AND A MONSTROUS ROKUROKUBI! BUT.. EVEN IF HE'S BECOME A SPIRIT MONSTER HE WAS ORIGINALLY JUST A HUMAN, RIGHT!?
BEHEAD!? KILL! HEAVEN'S HOUNDS HAVE TO GO THAT FAR!?
CAN I TRULY BRING MYSELF TO KILL SOMETHING THAT WAS ONCE A MAN?
DO HEAVEN'S HOUNDS ACTUALLY HAVE THIS MUCH JURISDIC-TION!?
WAS IT A MISTAKE TO GET INVOLVED WITH HEAVEN, INC!?

Chapter 6: The Headsman


MACHI ABISU! WHY ARE YOU HERE!?
FOOL!
AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE I TOOK TO AWAKEN YOUR POWER, YOU USE IT FOR PETTY CRIMES!
WH-WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT!? I'M A BEING SUPERIOR TO MERE HUMANS!
IT'S BETTER IF THAT GIRL LEAVES BEFORE SHE SEES ANY MORE OF WHAT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN. IF SHE CAN MANAGE TO FORGET SOME OF IT, PERHAPS SHE WON'T HAVE TO DIE
!?

SCRAM!
AND ABSOLUTELY NO WORD TO ANYONE!
ANY CHATTER AND DEATH WILL COME CALLING!
HEE!

YOU'VE BETRAYED YOUR PROMISE DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHY I'M HERE?
W-WAIT A MINUTE, MACHI! NO...MISS ABISU!


NOW!

BUT I'VE KILLED EVERYONE WHO'S LAID EYES ON IT! I WOULD HAVE EVENTUALLY KILLED THAT GIRL JUST NOW!
BECAUSE IT WILL EXPOSE THE FACT WE PRESERVE THE DNA OF ALIENS WHO CAME HERE IN ANCIENT TIMES FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
FIRST! YOU WERE NOT TO DISPLAY YOUR SPECIAL POWER IN FRONT OF NORMAL PEOPLE!
ANYONE WHO CAN COMMIT THE PERFECT CRIME GIVES OFF A CERTAIN STENCH. WE ARE JUST A TINY NUMBER. IF ONE OF US IS EXPOSED AND IT COMES TO LIGHT THAT WE ARE HARMING THE WORLD, WE WILL BE DESTROYED!
SECOND! YOU WERE NOT TO COMMIT ANY CRIMES!
YOU CAN COMMIT THE PERECT CRIME!
-- BUT, IT'S A WASTE NOT TO USE THE POWER!

NO MATTER HOW TINY OUR NUMBER, THERE IS NO REASON TO BE AFRAID!
WE'RE SUPERIOR! WE'RE SUPER-HUMAN!
APPARENTLY WORDS ARE FUTILE.
IT WAS A MISTAKE TO GIVE YOU PART OF MY MAGATSUHI.
AT THIS RATE, I CANNOT LET YOU ROAM FREE. IT WOULD BE TOO DANGEROUS
THE KOUJIN GROUP WOULD COME TO DEAL WITH IT.
WHAT'S THE KOUJIN GROUP?
YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW.

I'M GOING TO DEAL WITH YOU RIGHT NOW MYSELF!
IT'S MY RESPON-SIBILITY!
HUH!?
THINK YA CAN TAKE ME!?

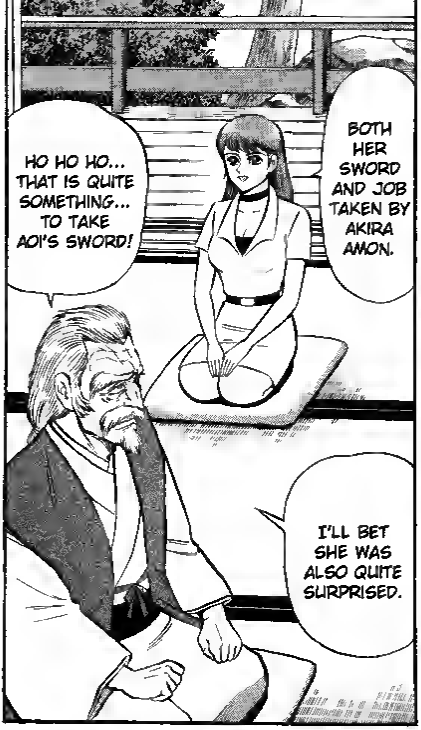
RIGHT!
HERE!
BUT HE'S NOT ALONE!

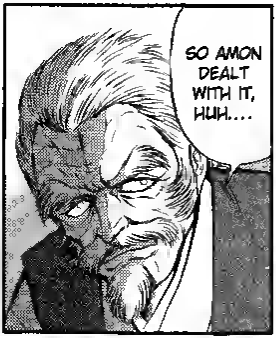
I'VE GOTTEN GOOD AT KILLING PEOPLE! I'LL KILL YOU, TOO!
FOOL! IF YOU'D LIVED QUIETLY, THERE'D BE NO NEED TO KILL YOU!
YOU THINK I'M JUST GONNA LET YOU KILL ME LIKE THAT!?
GUWAAAAAAH!
HAGURO!
YO!
IF YOU DIDN'T WANT ME TO USE THIS POWER, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE AWAKENED IT!

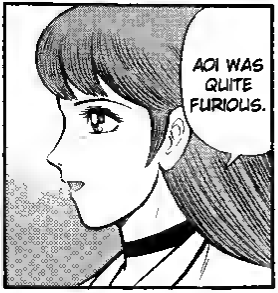
YOU TRULY ARE A MEDDLESOME SHIT DOG!
HEY! IT'S YOU AGAIN! AOI KATSURAGI!
AMON !?

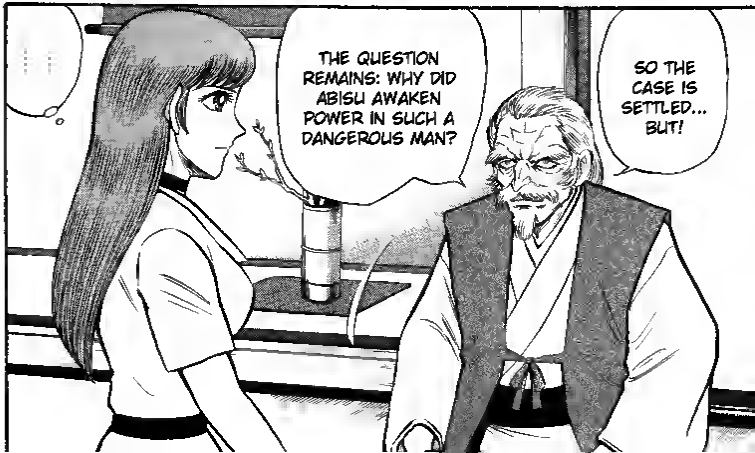
HAHAHA...YOU THINK IT'S YOUR JOB TO BURY ENEMIES OF SOCIETY?
AMON, STEP ASIDE! WE ARE HERE TO TERMINATE SOMEONE WHO HAS BECOME A MONSTER TO THE CORE!
BESIDES, THIS IS AN INTERNAL MATTER OF THE KOUJIN GROUP.

ヨハ
AAAAAAAAH!
YOU CAN'T ESC-APE!
UWAAAH!


HO HO HO... THAT IS QUITE SOMETHING... TO TAKE AOI'S SWORD!
BOTH HER SWORD AND JOB TAKEN BY AKIRA AMON.
I'LL BET SHE WAS ALSO QUITE SURPRISED.

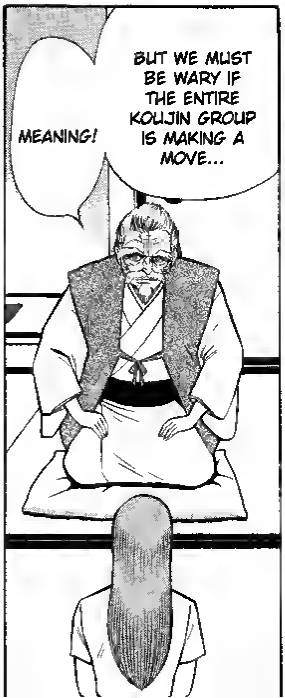

SO AMON DEALT WITH IT, HUH....


AOI WAS QUITE FURIOUS.

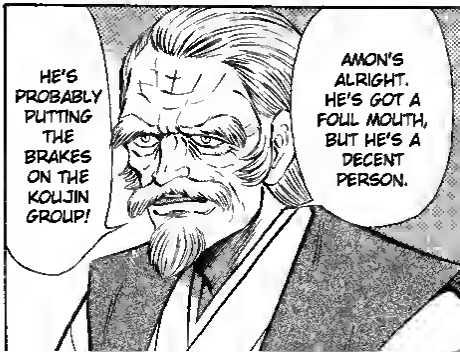

...
THE QUESTION REMAINS: WHY DID ABISU AWAKEN POWER IN SUCH A DANGEROUS MAN?
SO THE CASE IS SETTLED... BUT!

THE VIPERS OF HEAVEN DESIRE CHAOS!
THAT IS... COULD THAT BE THE REASON?
IF THE KOUJIN ARE MAKING THEIR MOVE...
THEN!?
THIS COUNTRY IS ALWAYS THROWN INTO WAR AND CHAOS.
REMEMBER. WHENEVER THE SNAKES MAKE A MOVE.....
THIS COUNTRY WILL ONCE AGAIN BE CONSUMED BY WAR!?

THE KOUJIN GROUP OF THE VIPERS OF HEAVEN IS LIKELY PLANNING IT!
I DO NOT WANT TO BELIEVE IT... BUT IT'S POSSIBLE!

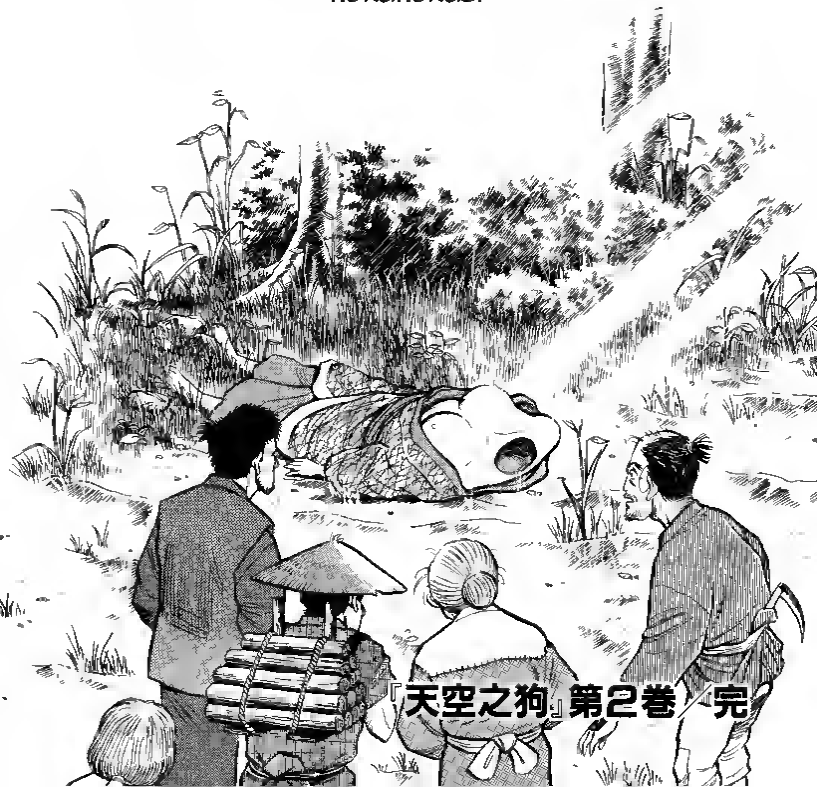

MEANING!
BUT WE MUST BE WARY IF THE ENTIRE KOUJIN GROUP IS MAKING A MOVE...

THEY THINK BY THROWING EVERYTHING INTO CHAOS THEY CAN INCREASE THEIR NUMBER OF SUPER-POWERED FOLLOWERS, RIGHT!?


HE'S PROBABLY PUTTING THE BRAKES ON THE KOUJIN GROUP!
AMON'S ALRIGHT. HE'S GOT A FOUL MOUTH, BUT HE'S A DECENT PERSON.

WE MUST NOT ALLOW THE RETURN OF THE VIPER KING!!
THE VIPER KING!?
YOU MEAN... THE MONSTER OF OLD WHO BROUGHT CALAMITY AND DARKNESS TO THE COUNTRY!?

IN THE LATE EDO PERIOD BOOK "SHOUKOKU KAIIKI" THERE IS A STORY OF A BIZARRE CORPSE WITH NO HEAD. THE CORPSE WAS DISCOVERED AT DAWN WITHOUT ANY SIGN OF BLOOD FLOW. WHERE THE HEAD SHOULD HAVE BEEN WAS JUST A GAPING HOLE IN THE TORSO. PEERING INSIDE THE HOLE THERE WAS NO SIGN OF ANY INTERNAL ORGANS. PEOPLE SAID WITHOUT A DOUBT THIS WAS THE BODY LEFT BEHIND BY A ROKUROKUBI WHO HAD COME OUT. THE PEOPLE WERE AFRAID AND WHILE THE HEAD WAS STILL GONE THEY POURED OIL OVER THE CORPSE AND BURNED IT—THE STORY CONCLUDES BY STATING THAT NO ONE KNOWS IF THIS WAS REALLY THE BODY OF A ROKUROKUBI



『天空之狗』第2卷／完

「天空之狗」第2巻は、'04年のモーニング25号から36・37合併号に掲載された作品を収録したものです。

編集部では、この作品に対する皆様の御意見・御感想をお待ちしております。

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